



THE COLLECTED POEMS  
OF  
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DUCKWORTH  
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## PREFACE

THESE poems were, with a few exceptions, written between the years 1920 and 1930. They are all that I care to preserve. Some of the poems—such early work, for instance, as the fragment from an unfinished play, called “The Madness of Saul”—I have only kept for the sake of a few lines.

No critic can be more severely conscious of the faults in some of these poems than am I. The writing of poetry is at all times a difficult matter; but women poets are faced with even more difficulties than are men poets, since technique is very largely a matter of physique, and, in the past, with the exception of Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market,” there has been no technically sufficient poem written by a woman.

The poems in “Façade,” and some of the songs in “Prelude to a Fairy Tale,” are technical experiments—studies in the effect that texture has on rhythm, and the effect that varying and elaborate patterns of rhymes and of assonances and dissonances have upon rhythm.

It only remains to be said that the book contains two new poems, “The Ghost whose Lips were Warm,” and “The Lament of Edward Blastock.” “The Hambone and the Heart” contains several new verses, and there is a new and changed ending to “Gold Coast Customs.”





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# THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

TO OSBERT

## I

WHEN we come to that dark house,  
Never sound of wave shall rouse  
The bird that sings within the blood  
Of those who sleep in that deep wood,  
For in that house the shadows now  
Seem cast by some dark unknown bough.  
The gardener plays his old bagpipe  
To make the melons' gold seeds ripe ;  
The music swoons with a sad sound—  
“ Keep, my lad, to the good safe ground !  
For once, long since, there was a felon  
With guineas gold as the seeds of a melon,  
And he would sail for a far strand  
To seek a waking, clearer land,—  
A land whose name is only heard  
In the strange singing of a bird.  
The sea was sharper than green grass,  
The sailors would not let him pass,  
For the sea was wroth and rose at him  
Like the turreted walls of Jerusalem,  
Or like the towers and gables seen  
Within a deep-boughed garden green.

And the sailors bound and threw him down  
 Among those wrathful towers to drown.  
 And oh, far best," the gardener said,  
 "Like fruits to lie in your kind bed,—  
 To sleep as snug as in the grave  
 In your kind bed, and shun the wave,  
 Nor ever sigh for a strange land  
 And songs no heart can understand."

I hunted with the country gentlemen  
 Who, seeing Psyche fly, thought her a hen

And aimed at her; the mocking wingèd one  
 Laughed at their wingless state, their crooked gun.

Then on the water—green and jewelled leaves  
 Hiding ripe fruitage—every sportsman grieves,

Sitting and grumbling in their flat boat edged  
 With the soft feathers of the foam, scarce fledged.

But I will seek again the palace in the wood,  
 Where never bird shall rouse our sleepy blood

Within the bear-dark forests, far beyond  
 This hopeless hunting, or Time's sleepy bond.

. . . . .

The gardener was old as tongues of nightingales,  
 That in the wide leaves tell a thousand Grecian tales

And sleep in golden nets of summer light,  
 "Sweet fig," he called me, and would stay the flight

Of plums that seemed Jove's golden-feathered rain.  
Then, birds like Fortunatus moved again

Among the boughs with silent feathered feet,—  
Spraying down dew like jewels amid the sweet

Green darkness ; figs, each like a purse of gold,  
Grow among leaves like rippled water green, and cold.

“ Beneath those laden boughs,” the gardener sighs,  
“ Dreaming in endlessness, forgotten beauty lies.

Long since, a wandering and airy nymph  
She seemed, when the bright ladies of the court  
Came like the sylvan equipage Dian  
Leads in her hunting through the deepest woods  
And the Dodonian leaves of summer ; only now  
We see them smile, an echo through dim leaves.”

Thus spoke the ancient man, wrinkled like old moon-  
light  
Beneath dark boughs. Time dreamed away to night,  
And while I heard the leaves like silver cymbals ring  
He told me this old tale of Beauty's mournful  
christening :—

Oh the pomp that passed those doors ;  
Trains still sweep the empty floors,  
Pelong, bulchauls, pallampores,

Soundless now as any breeze,  
Of amber and of orangeries  
That sweep from isles in Indian seas ;



While in the floating and mysterious leaves  
A silver sound like some forgotten music grieves.

The fairies all received an invitation,  
Ordered their sedan-chairs with great elation,

Their richest trains, their plumes, and their bright  
trumps,  
Like silver fruits that from dark branches grow in  
clumps.

The fays descend from each dark palanquin  
With fanfares and with lute sounds, walk within

The shade ; there, smiling dim as satyr-broods  
Hornèd as moons, that haunt our deepest woods,

Are country gentlemen, so countrified  
That in their rustic grace they try to hide

Their fingers sprouting into leaves ; we see  
Them sweet as cherries growing from a tree—

All fire and snow ; they grow and never move,  
Each in the grace of his Pan-haunted grove.

“ Her mouth,” the first fay said, “ as fair shall be  
As any gentle ripe red strawberry

That grows among the thickest silver leaves ;  
Her locks shall be as blonde as these—the eve’s

Great winds of beauty, fleeces from those flocks  
That Dian tends in her deep woods, those locks

Shall seem.” The second fairy said,  
 “ Blessings like dew fall on her lovely head !

For lovely as the cherubim’s soft breath,  
 Or Leda’s love, whose cold melodious death

Is heavenly music to the sad world lost,  
 Her skin shall be, as fair as silver frost.”

But now within the dark shade of a deep-dreaming  
     tree  
 A darker shade and panoply we see,

Drowning the soft sound of the plashing lute,  
 A great fanfare is heard, like unripe silver fruit.

“ Who is this now who comes ? ” Dark words reply  
     and swoon  
 Through all the high cold arbours of the moon :

“ The slighted Laidronette, the unbidden fay,  
 Princess of the Pagodas. . . . Shades, make way ! ”

The sedan-chair that hides her shade is mellow  
 As the trees’ great fruit-jewels glittering yellow,

And round it the old turbanned ladies flock  
 Like apes that try to pluck an apricock.

The little fawning airs are trembling wan ;  
 And silver as fair Leda’s love, the swan,

The moonlight seems ; the apricocks have turned  
to amber,

Cold as from the bright nymph Thetis' chamber,

And far away, the fountains sigh forlorn  
As waving rustling sheaves of silver corn.

The wicked fay descended, mopping, mowing  
In her wide-hooped petticoat, her water-flowing

Brightly-perfumed silks. . . . " Ah, ha, I see  
You have remembered all the fays but me ! "

(She whipped her panthers, golden as the shade  
Of afternoon in some deep forest glade.)

" I am very cross because I am old,  
And my tales are told,  
And my flames jewel-cold.

I will make your bright birds scream,  
I will darken your jewelled dream,  
I will spoil your thickest cream.

I will turn the cream sour,  
I will darken the bower,  
I will look through the darkest shadows and lour,—

And sleep as dark as the shade of a tree  
Shall cover you. . . . Don't answer me !  
For if the Princess prick her finger  
Upon a spindle, then she shall be lost

As a child wandering in a glade of thorn,  
 With sleep like roses blowing soft, forlorn,  
 Upon each bough. This, madam, is the cost  
 Of your dark rudeness. But I will not linger."

And with a dark dream's pomp and panoply  
 She swept out with her train ; the soft sounds die,  
 Of plumaged revelry bright as her train  
 Of courtiers ; and all was night again.

Then through the deepest shades went Laidronette,  
 Princess of the Pagodas ; in a pet  
 She left the domes, like rich and turbanned fruits  
 In the great gardens, and she left the lutes ;

Back to her palace in her great sedan  
 She floats ; worlds turn to snow before her fan—  
 She sweeps through the dark woods to her vast  
 palace

Where now, at last, she can unleash her malice.

There in her room, an amber orange burned  
 On the Hesperides' dark trees and spurned  
 By that gold-peruked conqueror the Sun—  
 An Alexander whence plumed rivers run,

Fearing his fierceness, Ethiopian shapes  
 The heat had kissed, with lips like burning grapes,  
 Unwigged her for the night, while her apes beg  
 That she will leave uncurtained that Roc's egg,

Her head, a mount of diamonds bald and big  
 In the ostrich feathers that compose her wig.  
 Her dwarfs as round as oranges of amber  
 Among the tall trees of the shadow clamber,

And in Night's deep domain she monstrous lies  
 With every little wicked dream that flies  
 And crawls ; with old Bacchantes black with wine,  
 Whose very hair has changed into a vine,

And ancient satyrs whose wry wig of roses  
 Nothing but little rotting shames discloses ;  
 They lie where shadows, cold as the night breeze,  
 Seem cast by rocks, and never by kind trees.

## II

NEXT dawn, the ancient chamberlain  
 Came like someone who has lain

For years beneath the deepest water. . . .  
 He called the housekeeper's young daughter,

Where she sat in her bedgown,  
 Smoothing the dusky dawn's owl-down,

Until she leaned out through the wet  
 Leaves in her pale sarcenet.

" Forget the dawn is still owl-dark,  
 Forget the wet leaves . . . you must hark :

Owing to the fairy's malice,  
 No spindles must be in the palace."

In their dark leaf-hid bower the maidens chatter like  
 a bird

Awakening : " Phœbe, Audrey, have you heard ?

Oh, the dark panic here this very night,  
The slighted fairy's anger and our good queen's  
fright,

And all our spindles banished ! it would seem  
That we have naught to do all day but dream ! ”

When the dew seems like trembling silver leaves,  
Cross Poll Troy looks out through the palace  
eaves. . . .

“ Knot up your butter-yellow satin hair,  
You lazy queans. . . . Come quick ! come down  
the stair !

Anne, Anne,  
Come draw the milk !  
The cream must be as thick as silk  
And yellow as the ripest sheen  
Of apricock or nectarine.  
Beneath the great leaves of that tree  
Wicked Goat-foot I can see !  
He'll steal the milk and steal the cream  
While you lie in a lazy dream.  
Fie, the lazy birds, the shames !  
Phœbe, you must light the flames ;  
They will spring like greenest leaves  
Growing round your bower's dim eaves.  
Oh the foliage shrill and green  
In the fire ! you lazy quean,  
Dream not of your heart's desire,—  
Phœbe, come and light the fire ! ”

## III

THEN through the broad green leaves the gardener  
came

With a basket filled with honeyed fruits of dawn  
Plucked from the thickest leaves. They heard him  
sing

As he walked where that pillared avenue  
Of tall clear-fruited ripe trees grew  
(For so the Palace seemed) ; and sweet  
His song fled, soft as wind and fleet :

“ Now the dawn lights seem  
Ripe yellow fruits in a dream  
Among the great green leaves  
Of dawn and rustling sheaves.

The vast sun's rays like sheaves of wheat  
Are gold and dry,  
All bound together, growing yet—  
An early offering. I

Heard the old King's lullabies  
That his nurse the South Wind sighs,  
As she heaps the honeycombs  
Where he lies ; the fruit-ripe domes

All around him, clear and sweet. . . .  
And now the old King's cockscomb crown  
Is nodding, falls a-down, a-down. . . .  
Till the golden sheaves of the sun shall be mown  
He will lie in the palace above the wheat.

The dew all tastes of ripening leaves ;  
 Dawn's tendril fingers heap  
 The yellow honeyed fruits whose clear  
 Sound flows into his sleep.

Those yellow fruits and honeycomb. . . .  
 ' Lulla-lullaby,'  
 Shrilled the dew on the broad leaves—  
 ' Time itself must die—

(—must die ').

Now in the palace the maidens knead  
 And bake the little loaves of the bread,  
 Gold as the sun ; they sighing said,  
 When will the sun begin to seed  
 And waken the old Dead—

(cold Dead) ? ' ' "

IV

DO, do,  
 Princess, do,  
 The fairy Chatte Blanche rocks you slow.  
 Like baskets of white fruit or pearls  
 Are the fairy's tumbling curls,—  
 Or lattices of roses white  
 Wherethrough the snows like doves take flight.  
 Do, do,  
 Princess, do,  
 How furred and white is the fallen snow.



Do, do,  
 Princess. do,  
 Like singing blackbirds are the eyes  
 Of the fairy old and wise.  
 A honeyed tune, the crystal drops  
 Of rain that falls, and never stops,  
 From flowers as white as seraphims'  
 Breath no winter ever dims. . . .

Do, do,  
 Princess, do,  
 Like birds that peck fruit sweet and shrill  
 With painted bill,  
 Flies down the snow.

The angels came with footsteps light,  
 They brushed her hair to make it bright,  
 They taught her to be sweet and wise  
 With kisses faint as butterflies.

They said, "When you go up to heaven  
 The nursery clock shall ne'er strike seven.  
 Your boudoir shall be of white satin,  
 You shall not say your prayers in Latin—  
 But you shall dance a minuet  
 On heaven's floors ; frizzed mignonette  
 Shall seem your curls, of heaven's flowers  
 Most fair ; and you shall sit in bowers

Of honeysuckle sweet as those pink fires  
 Whereby the angels dry their locks upon the lights'  
 gold wires."

And when the Queen called for her child, they  
 brought  
 Only her image, formed to please the Court. . . .

An old man with a gardener's hat and red  
 Poll-parrot nose brought her a tiny bed

Whereon lies folded a small poppet rose  
 That in her dark leaves like a little babe lies close.

For after Laidronette's wild rage was spent,  
 The chamberlain to the child's nursery went

And sped her far away, like the East Wind,  
 To worlds of snow, far from the fairy's mind.

And there the Princess stayed till she was weaned  
 From milk of doves ; then o'er the snow, bright-  
 preened

By its sharp bill, the wind, the chamberlain  
 Whisked the Princess back to the Court again.

## V

BUT the Dowager Queen shook her old head :  
 " The rose, the peach, and the quince-flower red  
 And the strawberry flower in the snows are dead.  
 If none of the rose-tribe can survive  
 The snow, then how can our poppet live ? "

And in her gown of quilted satin,  
 As red as quince-flowers, she reads Latin  
 Missals to the peaches that grow  
 Gilded with suns, then fade like snow ;

They lie in the nets of dew at leisure.  
 And this is now her only pleasure—  
 This and her parrot long ago  
 Dead,—but none dared tell her so,

And therefore the bird was stuffed and restored  
 To lifeless immortality ; bored  
 It seemed, but yet it remained her own ;  
 And she never knew the bird's soul had flown.

And so indeed seemed Destiny,—  
 A bird fine-feathered, fair to see  
 In spite of its condor-wings, fierce beak,  
 And hooded eyes. . . . Grown old and weak,

Imprisoned now in a gilded cage  
 In her powder-closet, far from the rage  
 Of winter, it can only sing  
 Roulades, and preen its bright clipped wing

Upon her perfumed dressing table  
 In a cage with a foolish bell-hung gable,  
 Beneath the portrait of dead Queen Anne  
 (Whose life was the sweet air blown from a fan),

'Midst brightly perfumed water-flowing  
 Eighteenth-century silks where growing  
 Strawberry flowers of the frail frost  
 Upon the diamond-panes are lost.

## VI

AT Easter when red lacquer buds sound far slow  
Quarter-tones for the old dead Mikado,

Through avenues of lime trees, where the wind  
Sounds like a chapeau chinois, shrill, unkind,—

The Dowager Queen, a curling Korin wave  
That flows for ever past a coral cave,

With Dido, Queen of Carthage, slowly drives  
(Her griffin dog that has a thousand lives)

Upon the flat-pearled and fantastic shore  
Where curled and turbanned waves sigh “Never-  
more,”

And she is sunk beneath a clear still lake  
Of sleep,—so frail with age she cannot wake. . . .

A strange horizon and a soundless sea  
Must separate wise age from you and me—

They watch life’s movements ripening like fruit  
And sigh, knowing the gnarled and twisted root.

O people building castles on the sand,  
And taking one another by the hand,

What do you find within each other’s eyes?—  
What wisdom unknown of the lonely wise?—

The promise of what spring, the certainty  
Of what eternal life to come,—what lie ?

Only the sound of Time's small muffled drum,  
The sound of footsteps that will never come,

And little marches all beribboned gay  
That lead down the lime avenues away

To the dark grave . . . we for a little weep,  
Then pray a little, sinking into sleep.

How far is this wise age from the bright youth  
Of Princess Cydalise, a warm wind from the south ?

## VII

IN the great nursery where the poppet maids  
Seem small round fruits that grow in leafy glades,

The Princess grew in beauty till she seemed  
That gentle maid of whom Endymion dreamed.

And in those evenings when the lovely moon  
Shone through the smiling woods of deepest June,

Then through the curtains she would play "Bo-  
Peep"  
With fleecy lamb-tailed clouds, when she should  
sleep.

Sometimes the moon would sing her ancient songs  
Of lovely ladies and forgotten wrongs ;

And once she whispered that within the wood  
An ancient satyr, wiser than the brood

From which he sprang, within a cloudy cave  
Teaches philosophies both old and grave.

The Princess said, " With my light step I will be  
gone,  
To peep within that far cave—but alone ! "

Yet in the darkness, her gazelle-light footsteps ran  
Far from the cave of that wise satyr-man.

## VIII

IN the great gardens, after bright spring rain,  
We find sweet innocence come once again,  
White periwinkles, little pensionnaires  
With muslin gowns and shy and candid airs,

That under saint-blue skies, with gold stars sown,  
Hide their sweet innocence by spring winds blown,  
From zephyr libertines that like Richelieu  
And d'Orsay their gold-spangled kisses blew ;

And lilies of the valley whose buds blonde and tight  
Seem curls of little school-children that light  
The priests' procession, when on some saint's day  
Along the country paths they make their way ;

Forget-me-nots, whose eyes of childish blue,  
 Gold-starred like heaven, speak of love still true ;  
 And all the flowers that we call " dear heart,"  
 Who say their prayers like children, then depart

Into the dark. Amid the dew's bright beams  
 The summer airs, like Weber waltzes, fall  
 Round the first rose who flushed with her youth  
 seems  
 Like young Princesses dressed for their first ball :

Who knows what beauty ripens from dark mould  
 After the sad wind and the winter's cold ?—  
 But a small wind sighed, colder than the rose  
 Blooming in desolation, " No one knows."

## IX

THE Princess was young as the innocent flowers  
 That bloom and love through the bright spring hours ;  
 Sometimes she crept through locked doors to annoy  
 The palace housekeeper, cross Mrs. Troy,  
 Who kept all the whimpering sad ghosts locked  
 In a cupboard, was grieved and faintly shocked  
 If the Princess Jehanne, long since dead,  
 Whose hair was of costly long gold thread,  
 Would slip her flat body, like a gleaming  
 Quivering fish in a clear pool dreaming,  
 Through the deep mesh of a conversation,  
 Making some ghostly imputation ;—  
 Or if she frightened the maids till they wince  
 By stealing a withered gold-crowned quince

Wherewith they make preserves ; in the gloom  
 She seems, as she glimmers round the room,  
 Like a lovely milk-white unicorn  
 In a forestial thicket of thorn.

Life was so still, so clear, that to wake  
 Under a kingfisher's limpid lake  
 In the lovely afternoon of a dream  
 Would not remote or stranger seem.  
 Everything seemed so clear for a while—  
 The turn of a head or a deep-seen smile,  
 Then a smile seen through wide leaves or deep water,  
 That beauty seemed to the King's daughter ;  
 For a flying shadow passed, then gone  
 Was the gleam, and the Princess was alone.

How sweet seemed the flowers of spring again—  
 As pink as Susan and Polly and Jane,  
 Like country maids so sweet and shy  
 Who bloom and love and wonder not why :  
 Now when summer comes it seems the door  
 To the graves that lie under the trivial floor,  
 And the gardens hard to touch and shining,  
 Where no mirage dew lies whining.  
 And the sweet flowers seem for a fading while  
 Dear as our first love's youthful smile,—  
 Till they bruise and wound the heart and sense  
 With their lost and terrible innocence.

## X

WHEN each clear raindrop holds for flight  
 A wingless world all plumage-bright,



Like crystal-clear wysteria,  
After the storm's hysteria,

The Princess visited the farm  
Where all the beasts lie, furred as palm

That on the budding Easter boughs  
Among the winds of beauty grows.

The farm-pond, fruitish-soft and ripe,  
Was smooth as a daguerreotype ;

The farm-maid, Rosa, under flimsy  
Muslin skies, an angel's whimsy,

Walked. . . . Her daisy-frillèd frock  
Was stiff and harder than a rock,

Frills touch her feet, like plants foam down ;  
Her wooden trellised hair is brown.

The grass is furry as a bear  
With heat ; the donkey's panniers flare

With fruits whose clear complexions, waxen,  
Hide in leaves all hairy-flaxen.

And from the sky, white angels lean  
To stroke poor Dobbin's palm-furred skin,

And pluck from the round leaves the pink  
Schoolgirlish summer fruits that wink—

Giggle insipidly. On winding  
Roads whose dust seems gilded binding

Made for "Paul et Virginie"—  
(So flimsy-tough those roads are), see

The panniered donkey pass. The ass's  
Thoughts as through the dust he passes

Where leaves seem parasols of gauze  
Shading the striped wooden floors,

Seem like this : "When long ago  
I worked for Balaam, never so

Appeared an angel ! times are stranger  
Now," and turning to his manger

He longs, for loads have made him weary,  
For gentian stars, all rough and hairy,

And trees that bear white satin streamers  
Of lovely flowers to please poor dreamers.

The Princess passed goats, gold as wheat,  
With a kind white milky bleat,

Under the wide leaves mild as milk ;  
The billowing pigs with ears of silk ;

Maternal cows with a white horn  
As hard and dry as rustling corn—

All the poor shadows cast by our sad earthly dress  
Of faults and virtues, wavering childishness !

## XI

WHEN we were young, how beautiful life seemed !—  
The boundless bright horizons that we dreamed,

And the immortal music of the Day and Night,  
Leaving the echo of their wonder and their might

Deep in our hearts and minds. How could the dust  
Of superstitions taught in schoolrooms, lust

In love's shape, dim our beauty ? What dark lie,  
Or cruelty's voice, could drown this God-made  
harmony ?

For we knew naught of prison-worlds man built  
Around us that we may not know man's guilt,—

The endless vistas of the goatish faces  
Echoing each other, and the basis

Of clay, the plumeless wings of Destiny,  
The vistas leading only to the grave where we must  
lie.

. . . . .

Then all the beauty of the world lay deep  
Mirrored within the beauty water-clear  
Of flowering boughs ; Helen and Deirdre dreamed  
And fading, wakened in that loveliness  
Of watery branches. In that dead wild spring  
Through the bird's shaken voice we heard God sing.

But age has dimmed our innocent paradise  
 With a faint shadow, shaken dust within our eyes,—  
 And we are one now with the lonely wise,  
 Knowing the spring is only the clear mirage  
 Of an eternal beauty that is not.  
 Those were the days when the fleet summer seemed  
 The warmth and infinite loveliness of God,  
 Who cared for us, within a childish heaven.  
 We could believe then ! Oh the lips and eyes  
 That spoke of some far undimmed paradise !  
 Those were the days. . . .

## XII

NOW that the summer only seems the sad  
 Mechanical dull action of the light  
 And shadow playing over a dead world—  
 Dead as my heart—it seems too long ago  
 For the remembrance of the beauty and the world we  
     used to know ;

When the warm lights of afternoon were mellow  
 As honeyed yellow pears, the Princess played  
 At Troy Town in the palace garden, tossed  
 And through the smiling leaves of summer lost  
 A round compact gold ball, the smaller image  
 Of this hard world, grown dry of any love—  
 Or walked upon the shore, watched the fantastic  
 Arabesque, the horsemanship of waves.  
 “Mademoiselle Fantoche, where do they go ?”  
 A faint cold wind replied, “I do not know.”

## THE PRINCESS

“ Upon the infinite shore by the sea  
 The lovely ladies are walking like birds,  
 Their gowns have the beauty, the feathery  
 Grace of a bird’s soft raiment ; remote  
 Is their grace and their distinction,—they float  
 And peck at their deep and honeyed words  
 As though they were honeyed fruits ; and this  
 Is ever their life, between sleep and bliss  
 Though they are winged for enchanted flight,  
 They yet remain ever upon the shore  
 Of Eternity, seeking for nothing more,  
 Until the cold airs dull their beauty  
 And the snows of winter load those dazzling  
 Wings, and no bird-throat can sing ! ”

## THE GOVERNANTE

“ Look not on the infinite wave,  
 Dream not of the siren cave,  
 Nor hear the cold wind in the tree  
 Sigh of worlds we cannot see.

*(She sings)*

The hot muscatelle  
 Siesta time fell,  
 And the Spanish belle  
 Looked out through her shutters.

Under the eglantine  
 Thorny and lean  
 A shadow was playing a mandoline, mutters

Only this : ' Wave  
 Your fan . . . siren cave  
 Never was cold as the wind from the grave.

The governante  
 Came walking andante,—  
 Sailed like a brigantine, black of brow.

And the falconette  
 Who danced a ballette  
 Sang on the pretty, the brunette bough :

' The ambassade  
 Of shadows invade  
 Death's most ultimate, peaceful shade. . . .  
 Lovely lady, where are you now ? '

. . . . .

Come, Madame, you must eat your creamy curd,  
 Soft as the plumage of a bird,—

Break through the jewelled branches' bird-soft gloom  
 And find Malinn within the cool still-room."

### XIII

WHERE reynard-haired Malinn  
 Walks by rock and cave,  
 The Sun, a Chinese mandarin,  
 Came dripping from the wave.

“ Your hair seems like the sunrise  
 O’er Persia and Cathay—  
 A rose-red music strange and dim  
 As th’ embalmèd smile of seraphim,”

He said to her by the white wave  
 In the water-pallid day  
 (A forest of white coral boughs  
 Seemed the delicate sea-spray) :

“ In envy of your brighter hair,—  
 Since, Madam, we must quarrel,—  
 I’ve changed the cold flower-lovely spray  
 To branches of white coral ;

And when, white muslin madam, you  
 Coquette with the bright wind,  
 I shall be but thin rose-dust ;  
 He will be cold, unkind.”

The flowers that bud like rain and dream  
 On thin boughs water-clear,  
 Fade away like a lovely music  
 Nobody will hear,

And Eolus and Boreas  
 Brood among those boughs,  
 Like hermits haunting the dark caves  
 None but the wise man knows.

But Malinn’s reynard-coloured hair,  
 Amid the world grown sere

Still seemed the Javanese sunrise  
 Whose wandering music will surprise  
 Into cold bird-chattering cries  
 The Emperor of China  
 Lying on his bier.

## XIV

THE birds, strange flashing glints of another life,  
 Peck at the fruits of summer, that too soon  
 Will fade into a little gilded dust.  
 Then underneath the dancing, glancing bough  
 Came Malinn, with her round cheeks dyed as pink  
 As the insipid empty-tasting fruits  
 Of summer giggling through the rounded leaves.

Outside the stillroom was a cherry tree,  
 And through the dancing shadows she could see  
 Cross ancient Poll Troy come to do her duty. . . .  
 She had a cold frost-bitten beauty  
 Like blue moonlight smooth and cold  
 As amber ; with her trembling old  
 Hands she tied the boughs aloft  
 Through the air all creamy soft ;  
 Then on the sill of the woodland dairy,  
 Moving as quick and light as a fairy,  
 She put a bowl of the thickest cream  
 (As thick as chestnut flowers in a dream).  
 The gossiping naiad of the water,  
 In her sprigged gown like the housekeeper's daughter,  
 Giggles outside the stillroom ; she  
 Plucks at the thick-bustled cherry tree.



And Poll is cross ; she chases cherried  
 Country maids like thickest-berried  
 Cherry trees in their ruched gown  
 Till they run from the palace, down,  
 Like the sprigged muslin waterfalls  
 Of this clear country, to where calls  
 Pan, with his satyrs on the rocks  
 Feeding their wave-weary flocks.  
 The naiad's giggling irritates  
 Cross Poll Troy till at last she rates  
 Her through the thick-leaved cherry tree :  
 " My eyes are dim,—I yet can see  
 You, lazy quean ! Go work ! " " I can't."  
 " I say you shall ! " " I say I shan't ! "  
 " But when the airs are creamy soft  
 And candle-flames are quince flowers, oft  
 Though my heart flutters like a bird,  
 All dream-dark, though as soft as curd  
 The moonlight seems still, from my bed  
 I rise and work, you sleepy head !  
 Though I am dim and very old,  
 I wake the flames all jewel-cold,  
 The flames that seem, when they soar high,  
 Like waterfalls of jewels ; you sigh,  
 While I, Miss, churn and make the curd,"  
 Piped Poll Troy like a small cross bird,  
 Then shuts the stillroom window, goes, for she  
 Still hears the naiad giggling through the tree.

But Malinn stays where the deep fire's red flowers  
 Should be as sweet and red as hawthorn bowers.

*(She sings)*

“ The purring fire has a bear’s dull fur,  
 Its warmth is sticky, dark as a burr. . . .  
 Come drowse, for now there is no eye  
 To watch, no voice to ask me why !  
 All night I hear my animal blood  
 Cry to my youth, ‘ Come to the wood ’ . . .  
 But Darkness lumbers like a bear,  
 Grumbling, cumpers floor and stair. . . .  
 And on the eightieth step, I know  
 That on the moon’s green lichen stain  
 I’ll slip . . . and his dark breath will blow  
 My light out. . . . All will be still again ! ”

She cried out to the naiad : “ I have torn  
 My flimsy dress upon a thicket’s thorn ;  
 The petal of a briar-rose lies forlorn  
 Upon it.” Through the glinting leaves about the  
     dairy  
 Appeared the cream-smug face of the wicked  
     fairy. . . .

“ You’ve torn your dress, my poppet. . . . I’ll come  
     in. . . .  
 I’ve brought my spindle with me and I’ll spin  
 A dress for you. . . .

        Such grey-blue sleeves  
 Of muslin, like the wind of eve’s ;  
 It shall have frills that flare like leaves,

The ribbons shall be preened,  
 Quilled prettily and sheened,

As when the courtier-wind plays with a flock  
 Of birds for battledore and shuttlecock—  
 Whose feathers stream like ribbons. I will hide  
 A jewel within each one : you'll seem a bride

For Ariel or some rich water-god. . . . Come, spin ! ”  
 Malinn looked through the leaves. . . . “ Ma'am,  
 please come in ! ”

Far off, the Martha-coloured scabious  
 Grew among dust as dry as old Eusebius,

And underneath the cotton-nightcap trees  
 Wanders a little cold pig-snouted breeze.

Then in a gown all frilled with foliage like hell's fires,  
 And quilled like nests of cockatrices, with the light's  
 gold wires

Sewing it stiff, old Laidronette the fairy  
 Crept through the window of the woodland dairy.

Butter and cream  
 Turn hard as a jewel,  
 The shrill flames scream,  
 The leaves mutter “ cruel.”

Through the dark jewelled leaves  
 See the Princess peep  
 As lovely as eve's  
 Soft wind of sleep.

She picks up the spindle. “Oh, the curious  
bliss ! . . .

. . . It pricks my finger now. How strange this  
is,—

For I am like that lovely fawn-queen dead  
Long since,—pierced through the pool-clear heart,”  
she said.

Her room now seems like some pale cave  
Haunted by a goatish wave.

Through the curtains—waves of water—  
Comes the housekeeper’s young daughter,

Where like coral-branches seem  
The candles’ light, the candles’ gleam.

“Does Echo mourn her lost love there ? ”  
Echo is a courtly air

Sighing the name of Cydalise  
Beside clear pools of sleep ; she sees

Her like a nymph in some deep grot  
(Where the wave whispers not)

Like a rose-bush in that cave  
Haunted by a goatish wave.

## XV

DO, do,  
 Princess, do,  
 Like a tree that drips with gold you flow  
 With beauty ripening very slow.  
 Soon beneath that peaceful shade  
 The whole world dreaming will be laid.  
 Do, do,  
 Princess, do,  
 The years like soft winds come and go.

Do, do,  
 Princess, do,  
 How river-thick flow your fleeced locks  
 Like the nymphs' music o'er the rocks. . . .  
 From satyr-haunted caverns drip  
 These lovely airs on brow and lip.  
 Do, do,  
 Princess, do,  
 Like a tree that drips with gold you flow.

## XVI

BUT far from snow-soft sleep, the country Fair  
 Spangled like planets the bucolic air  
 Under hot Capricorn, with gold goat-legs,  
 Rough satyr hands, that in the sunburnt hay  
 Pulled the long wind-blown hair of Susans, Megs,  
 And under great trees dark as water lay.

It seemed a low-hung country of the blind,—  
 A sensual touch upon the heart and mind,

Like crazy creaking chalets hanging low  
 From the dark hairiness of bestial skies  
 The clouds seem, like a potting-shed where grow  
 The flower-like planets for the gay flower-show :  
 Gold-freckled calceolarias,  
 Marigolds, cinerarias,  
 African marigolds, coarse-frilled  
 And cherries, apricots, all chilled  
 With dew, for thus the bright stars seemed  
 To cottage windows where none dreamed.  
 But country gentlemen who from their birth,  
 Like kind red strawberries, root deep in earth  
 And sleep as in the grave, dream far beyond  
 The sensual aspects of the hairy sky  
 That something hides, they have forgotten why !  
 And so they wander, aiming with their gun  
 At mocking feathered creatures that have learnt  
 That movement is but groping into life,—  
 Under rough trees like shepherds' goatish tents.

And only Midsummer's wide country Fair  
 Seems to them heaven and hell, and earth and air.

The people ride in roundabouts ; their hair  
 Is like the gardens of the Pleiades,  
 Or the first impulse from which music sprung,  
 And the dark sound in the smooth growth of trees ;  
 They sparkle like the sea ; their love is young  
 For ever, they are golden as the boy  
 Who gave an apple smoother than the breeze  
 To lady Venus, lovely as the seas ;  
 Their lips are like the gold fires burning Troy.

Like harsh and crackling rags of laughter seems  
 The music, bright flung as an angel's hair—  
 Yet awful as the ultimate despair  
 Of angels and of devils. . . . Something dreams  
 Within the sound that shrieks both high and low  
 Like some ventriloquist's bright-painted show  
 On green grass, shrill as anger, dulled as hate :  
 It shrieks to the dulled soul, " Too late, too late ! "  
 Sometimes it jangles thin as the sharp wires  
 Whereon the poor half-human puppets move ;  
 Sometimes it flares in foliage like hell's fires,  
 Or whispers insincerities for love.  
 A little hurdy-gurdy waltz sounds hollow  
 And bright-husked as the hearts of passing people,  
 Whose talk is only of the growth of plums  
 And pears : " Life goes, Death never comes,"  
 They sigh, while the bright music like a wave  
 Sings of far lands and many a siren cave.

And there are terrible and quick drum-taps  
 That seem the anguished beat of our own heart  
 Making an endless battle without hope  
 Against materialism and the world.  
 And sometimes terrible lumbering Darkness comes  
 Breaking the trivial matchboard floors that hide  
 From us the Dead we dare not look upon :  
 O childish eyes, O cold and murdered face—  
 Dead innocence and youth that were our own !

But age has brought a little subtle change  
 Like the withdrawal caused by the slow dropping  
 Of cold sad water on some vast stone image :

A slow withdrawal, a sad, gradual change  
 O'er tragic masks through which strange gods have  
     cried—

Till seen through death-cold rents in saturnine  
     leaves

They seem, almost, to echo in their form  
 The saturnine cold laughter of the water.  
 And this, too, is the fate of country masks  
 Of Comedy, as fresh as smiling fruits  
 Of summer seen, vermillion, through deep leaves.

Now from the countrysides where people know  
 That Destiny is wingless and bemired,  
 With feathers dirty as a hen's, too tired  
 To fly—where old pig-snouted Darkness grovels  
 For life's mired rags among the broken hovels—  
 The country bumpkins come, with faces round  
 And pink as summer fruits, with hair as gold,  
 Sharp-pointed, as the summer sun (that old  
 Bucolic mime, whose laughing pantomime  
 Is rearing pink fruits from the sharp white rime).  
 They come from little rooms, each a poor booth  
 (Seen through the summer leaves, all smiling smooth).  
 There, for all beauty, is the badly painted  
 Ancestral portrait of their grey-beard God ;  
 In that poor clownish booth it is so cold  
 That small airs prick like grass, a wooden sword.

They pass along the country roads as thick  
 With walls and gardens as a childish heaven,  
 Where all the flowers seem a pink fleshly heart  
 And mirage-dews sigh, " We will never part."



And there are young Princesses at each inn,  
 And poor young people poverty makes wise,  
 With eyes like maps of the wide summer heaven ;  
 And on the country roads there is a shrine,  
 As blue and sparkling as the sea-god's wine,  
 For country gods and goddesses of gardens,  
 Where every fruit and flower to old songs hardens :  
 Pomona, tinsel-pink as that bright pear,  
 The moon—she seems a poor bucolic clown  
 With dry and gilded foliage for her hair,—  
 Where branches cast a shallow melancholy,  
 An owl-soft shadow falling over folly.  
 The pink schoolgirlish fruits hang in bright sheaves  
 Between the rounded and the negroid leaves. . . .  
 And we remember nursery afternoons  
 When the small music-box of the sweet snow  
 Gave half-forgotten tunes, and our nurse told  
 Us tales that fell with the same tinkling notes. . . .  
 “ Once on a time,” she said, “ and long ago.”  
 Her voice was sweet as the bright-sparkling  
     rime,  
 The fruits are cold as that sweet music's time—  
 Yet all those fruits like the bright snow will fade.

The country bumpkins travel to the Fair,  
 For Night and Day, and Hell and Heaven, seem  
 Only a clown's booth seen in some bad dream,  
 Wherefrom we watch the movements of our life  
 Growing and ripening like summer fruits  
 And dwindling into dust, a mirage lie :  
 Hell is no vastness, it has naught to keep  
 But little rotting souls and a small sleep.

It has the same bright-coloured clarity we knew  
 In nursery afternoons so long ago,  
 Bright as our childish dreams ; but we are old,  
 This is a different world ; the snow lies cold  
 Upon our heart, though midsummer is here. . . .

## XVII

BUT in the Court, the little people know  
 That Sleep is bright as fruit, and soft as snow.

The sunlight seems like warm brocade  
 In the courtyard, through the great arcade ;

And golden as a Sultan's turban  
 The ripened medlars hang ; the urban

Maids of the ladies at the palace  
 Talked like birds, with a gentle malice,

And on the wall, light-motes take shapes  
 Of vines, with showers of emerald grapes.

“ Queen Venus is a toothless crone,  
 Blackened with age ; all night alone

She lies, and no bird ever cries  
 For the wild starlight of her eyes.”

“ Once Helen was Prince Paris' doxy ;  
 She meets her lovers now by proxy-

And wrinkled as the gold sea-sand  
Are the breasts that once seemed heaven's land."

"Look at that little shadow . . . oh, the joy,  
As black as any jewelled negro boy.

O little shade—see, I will call him Zambo.  
Look where he silent sits, and plays dumbcrambo,

There at the door, with ghosts . . . and his mentero,  
Half in brocaded sunlight, points to Zero !

Black fingers stretched to pluck the fruits of gold  
Through the great leaves. . . . I feel a sudden cold

Sweet air from the arcade. . . . Again it goes.  
The scented darkness seems as rich as snows,

Like cornucopias with ostrich plumes  
And great gold fruits, the clouds seem from these  
glooms."

Down in the great arcade of the courtyard  
The fairies' coachmen, tawny as a pard,

Are talking of those feathered July eves  
When all these dames desert their country leaves

(Though still as lovely as those moonlight maids  
Juno and Dian, haunting their deep glades)—

And in their coach, with maids and footmen, drive  
Up to the great town houses where they live ;

No longer they seem fairies, but we see  
Them named as the old Duchess of Bohea,

And Madam Cards, the Marchioness of Gout ;  
Though they are old, they still enjoy a rout,

And through the dark leaves of the shadow-grove,  
As wickedly as ever, eyes still rove

That dealt death from behind a fluttered fan  
In Pompeii, Athens, before Time began.

In courtyards stained with the black night like wine,  
Strange figures with hair lifted like a vine

Listen. . . . Who is it hearkens at their doors,  
In the vast rooms and endless corridors ?

It is goat-footed, mincing Death, who presses  
His muzzle at the keyhole, hears their dresses

Rustling like rose-leaves. . . . They hit him with  
their fan,  
Through scented moonlight move to their sedan.

When the hot gilded day will reach  
A restful close,  
A Japanese dwarf forest on the beach,  
With dark trees of the shadow, the street grows.  
How sand-like quivers the gold light  
Under the large black leaves of shadow ; mirage-  
bright  
It lies, that dusty gold,

Untouched of any air,  
 Like Dead-Sea fruit carved in cornelian, bold;  
 The faces of a man and Pleasure's mournful daughter  
 Show lovely in the light, a moment flare,  
 Then shadows fall again—dark agates through clear  
     water.

Then these Chinoiserie, old ghosts of red and  
     white  
 Smooth lacquer in their palanquins take flight,

For tea, and the last esoteric rage  
 Whose plumes may soften age, that harpy's cage.

Their smile is like Death's trap . . . a little gilded  
     dust  
 Of valueless beauty from the sun, soon must

Brush, for a fading while, each feathered cheek  
 That paradisal airs will never sleek,—

And round them, as they move, the unfading sea,  
     Eternity  
 With its cool feathered airs of beauty, sighs of no  
     horizons they can see.

What would these ghosts do, if the truths they  
     know,  
 That were served up like snow-cold jewelled fruits,  
 And the enfeathered airs of lutes,  
 Could be their guests in cold reality?  
 They would be shivering,  
 Wide-eyed as a negro king

Seeing the evanescent mirage snow,—  
 They would be silenced by the cold  
 That is of the spirit, endlessly,  
 Unfabled, and untold.

The swan's breath winter these have known is finer  
 Fading than the early snows of China,

The poems of Queen Marguerite of Navarre,  
 (Narcissus-petalled, perfumed like a star)

Or the Pleiades' citron-scented poems, fading like  
     the snows,  
 Perfuming their long fingers till their eyelids close.

The winters these have known have been too kind,  
 With skies that seemed the bitter gilded rind

Of unattainable fruits ; small women go  
 As white as ermines, and small winds are slow

As tunes upon a lute ; the point-lace on the trees,  
 And the pearl-berries of the snow upon dark bushes  
     freeze,

And the snow falls, as sharp and bright, unripe and  
     sour,  
 As the budding grapes' bright perfume, or the sweet  
     grape-flower.

The daughters of the Silence now are dead,  
 And these Chinoiserie ghosts,  
 These mummies in dim hosts,

Tread the long mournful avenues instead ;  
 Alarm the soul by their cold interest—  
 For what can be the purpose of their quest ?

When spring begins, in China and Thibet  
 Through bell'd lime-avenues a springe is set  
 To catch the softly-smiling wind,  
 The cherubim to catch and blind  
 As cruel men blind a singing-bird ;  
 They trap them with the sound of lutes  
 And the softest smiles of fruits,  
 That these old ghosts may prove the feathered  
     creatures real to hold,  
 And make them sing upon a perch of gold  
 In cages with a foolish bell-hung gable,  
 Amid the powders on their dressing-table ;  
 Till, trapped by our mortality, they die, and their  
     small bones,  
 Sounding as sweetly as the west wind's tones,  
 Are sold because they sound like a small music-box ;  
 Their slayers sell for silver the bright plumes in  
     flocks,  
 To make the pillows for a sleepy head  
 That never dreams of heaven, but the lonely Dead.

And still they dwindle the bright world down to  
     the gilded glooms  
 Of dust, these mummies, hieing, harrying fast  
 The Soul, their quarry, through the deserted tombs—  
 Or lying, lotus-eaters in a dreamful ease,  
 Perfuming their cold lips with silence and the past  
 Beneath the Asian darkness of smooth trees. . . .

Thus spoke the men ; then sleep came colder than  
the rose  
Blooming in desolation. . . . No one knows  
The end there is to dust—it is the soul that shall  
survive them at the last.

## XVIII

BENEATH a wan and sylvan tree  
Whose water-flowing beauty our tired eyes  
Can feel from very far, two travellers lie ;  
ed And one is swarthy as the summer wind,—  
A man who travelled from a far countree ;  
The other Soldan in his pomp and panoply  
Seems like le Roi Soleil in all his pride,  
When his gold periwig is floating wide.  
ir They talked together, those dark kings beneath  
the bough,  
And their songs mingled with soft winds that flow.

II THE SOLDAN (*sings*)  
“ When green as a river was the barley,  
Green as a river the rye,  
I waded deep and began to parley  
With a youth whom I heard sigh.  
‘ I seek,’ said he, ‘ a lovely lady,  
A nymph as bright as a queen,  
Like a tree that drips with pearls her shady  
locks of hair were seen ;  
And all the rivers became her flocks  
Though their wool you cannot shear,  
Because of the love of her flowing locks.



The kingly sun like a swain  
 Came strong, unheeding of her scorn,  
 Wading in deeps where she has lain,  
 Sleeping upon her river lawn  
 And chasing her starry satyr train.  
 She fled, and changed into a tree,—  
 That lovely fair-haired lady. . . .  
 And now I seek through the sere summer  
 Where no trees are shady !’

They say that Daphne never was more fair  
 With all the shaken pearls of her long hair—  
 The lovely tree that was Apollo’s love,  
 To whom he brought his richest spoils—than she !  
 And oh, that other Soldan, the hot sun  
 Burns not with love as I, with my dark pomp,  
 My helmet thick-plumed as a water-god’s,  
 Whose cornucopia filled with dripping jewels  
 Is not so rich as treasures I bear—  
 Dark spices, nard and kenard, ambergris . . .  
 No maid will change into a tree before my kiss !”

THE MAN FROM A FAR COUNTREE

“ But I will be content with some far-lesser maid,  
 Who feeds her flocks beneath a fair-haired tree  
 And listens to the wind’s song ; she shall be  
 My soldanesse, and rule my far countree.

*(He sings)*

Rose and Alice,  
 Oh, the pretty lassies,  
 With their mouths like a calice

And their hair a golden palace—  
Through my heart like a lovely wind they blow.

Though I am black and not comely,  
Though I am black as the darkest trees,  
I have swarms of gold that will fly like honey-bees,  
By the rivers of the sun I will feed my words  
Until they skip like those fleecèd lambs  
The waterfalls, and the rivers (horned rams),  
Then for all my darkness I shall be  
The peacefulness of a lovely tree—  
A tree wherein the golden birds  
Are singing in the darkest branches, oh ! ”

Thus sang those plumed kings, and the winds that  
flow  
Whispered of lands no waking heart may know.

## XIX

NOW from the silk pavilions of the seas  
The nymphs sing, gold and cold as orange-trees.

“ ‘Through gilded trellises  
Of the heat, Dolores,  
Inez, Manuccia,  
Isabel, Lucia,  
Mock Time that flies.  
‘Lovely bird, will you stay and sing,  
Flirting your sheenèd wing,—  
Peck with your beak, and cling  
To our balconies ? ’  
They flirt their fans, flaunting—

' O silence enchanting  
 As music ! ' then slanting  
 Their eyes,  
 Like gilded or emerald grapes,  
 They take mantillas, capes,  
 Hiding their simian shapes.  
 Sighs  
 Each lady, ' Our spadille  
 Is done.' . . . ' Dance the quadrille  
 From Hell's towers to Seville ;  
 Surprise  
 Their siesta,' Dolores  
 Said. Through gilded trellises  
 Of the heat, spangles  
 Pelt down through the tangles  
 Of bell-flowers ; each dangles  
 Her castanets, shutters  
 Fall while the heat mutters,  
 With sounds like a mandoline  
 Or tinkled tambourine. . . .  
 Ladies, ' Time dies ! ' "

And petals of the foam, like perfumed orange-  
 blossom,  
 Pelt the nymphs singing in their bowers—cold as  
 their bosom.

## XX

IN the hot noon—like glowing muscadine  
 The light seems, and the shade like golden wine—

Beneath the deep shade of the trees' arcade,  
All foppish in his dressing-gown's brocade

And turban, comes the great Magnifico,  
And hearkens not where the becafico

Time taps at the lovely sylvan trees.  
Now underneath the shadows fallen from these

The queen sits with her court, and through the glade  
The light from their silks casts another silver shade.

Home goes the great Magnifico, his dressing-gown  
Is changed for water-rustling silks that drown

The shades, and walking proudly as the breeze  
Now he advances through the sylph-slim trees.

"Madam, the Soldan and the King of Ethiop's land  
Approach as suitors for your daughter's hand."

The day grew water-pale and cool as eves. . . .  
A lady sang through water-rippling leaves :

"The mauve summer rain  
Is falling again—  
It soaks through the eaves  
And the ladies' sleeves—  
It soaks through the leaves

That like silver fish fall  
In the fountains, recall

Afternoons when I  
 Was a child small and shy  
 In the palace. . . . Fish lie

On the grass with lives darkling.  
 Our laughter falls sparkling  
 As the mauve raindrops bright  
 When they fall through the light  
 With the briefest delight.  
 The pavilions float  
 On the lake like a boat. . . .  
 Mauve rains from trees fall  
 Like wysteria flowers . . . all  
 My life is like this  
 And drifts into nothingness !

The strange ladies sigh  
 ' The autumn is nigh ' . . .  
 The King bows and mutters. . . .  
 His eyelids seem shutters  
 Of a palace pavilion  
 Deserted a million

Echoing years ago.  
 Oh, but the rain falls slow."

. . . . .

But no one heard the great Magnifico  
 Or this pale song, for underneath the low  
 Deep bough the queen slept, while the flowers that  
     fall  
 Seemed Ariadne's starry coronal.

## XXI

IN the great room above the orangery  
The old queen's dwarfs are drinking their bohea

While the thin flames seem gold and whispering  
leaves

Of trees in the Hesperides, whose faint sound grieves.

So small, they could be hid in a pomander,  
Miss Ellen and Sir Pompey Alexander

Seem . . . the tea is gold as evening,  
The perfumes in the orangery sing,

And, flashing like exotic-plumaged birds,  
The lovely shadows whisper unknown words.

Upon the wall, the portrait of Queen Anne  
Frowned at them, and waved a languid fan,—

Queen Anne, whose white wig glittering in the net  
Of gold light seems a florid bergerette,

Sheep-floury underneath the powder . . .  
Her lips' small strawberry said "Louder"

To the shadows' fluttering bird . . .  
But the lovely one scarce heard. . . .

The zephyrs' lips like ruffled roses sleek  
Caressingly, each faintly upturned cheek ;

And now the shutters like blue water  
Fall . . . where is the King's daughter ?

The candle-flames seem orange-flowers  
Whose pale light falls in perfumed showers ;

But Queen Anne, sleeping on the wall,  
Long dead, would answer not at all.

## XXII

THE little golden lights like Chinese ladies peep  
Through the old queen's curtains, then like sleep

Their gentle footsteps fade again and fail,  
And once again the world is ghostly pale.

In the queen's powder-closet, Mrs. Troy  
Teases the flames to wake them and annoy . . .

So pale are those thin ghostly flames that yet  
They seem like the old notes of a spinet

That sometimes sounds a courante or gavotte  
By Mozart or Scarlatti—sometimes not—

While the pale silken ribbons of the rain,  
Knotted, are fluttering down the window-pane.

But suddenly the flames turn green and red  
As unripe fruit ; their shrilling fills her head

With noises like a painted puppet-show ;  
And in that music, shrieking high and low,

Dead is the pointed flames' small minuet—  
And from the shrilling fire leaps Laidronette.

The ghostly apparition that appeared  
Wagged from her chin a cockatrice's beard ;

She crouches like a flame, the adder-sting  
Of her sharp tongue is ready ; hear her sing :

“ The candle flames bob  
Like strawberries low,  
Bobcherry, bobcherry,  
See them go  
In the hands of the queen's maids  
Under the trees  
Of the shadow, flickering in the breeze.  
Crept a starved and a humble air  
From the hovels, grunting with low pig-snout,—  
Starved thin, creeping  
Everywhere, weeping  
It blew the queen's strawberry candle-flames out.

The maids in long chequered gowns  
Hunting for these  
Find but the shadows'  
Flickering trees.”

The humble ghosts like poppet maids  
Walk tiptoe in the shadow glades.

Their mouths seem small red strawberries ;  
Their naïve, naiad-titterings freeze



The airs in the long corridors  
Where they must hark at hopeless doors.

And Mrs. Troy rose up like a thin shriek  
Or pointed flame. . . . "Oh, my poor head  
weak !

Oh dear,  
Oh dear,  
Whatever shall I do ?  
In the flames' shrill rout  
Laidronette slipped through.  
I forget the Latin  
For my prayer !  
My quilted satin  
Is beyond repair !  
I must tell the queen—  
But I dare not be seen !  
Oh dear, oh dear,  
I tremble with fear,  
Like a nectarine bough  
When the sun shines through.

How harmless has been my poor life—  
Yet when a young girl, I had strife !  
Out, alas ! how I remember  
That dawn, when to light the ember,  
I must steal and I must creep  
In the kitchen half asleep.  
Noises from the sharp green wood  
Burnt and bit my satyr blood,  
And my cockscomb hair raised ire  
In parrot-whistlers in the fire !

Now the ember as it dozes  
 Seems lattices of bunchèd roses,  
 Fuchsias and fat strawberries,  
 Dahlias, cherries, and one sees  
 Through those lattices' gold wire  
 The parrot-whistlers in the fire,  
 Pecking cherries every one.  
 'Polly, put the kettle on,'  
 Scream they ; 'scratch poor pretty Polly'  
 (Kettles hissing at their folly !).  
 From the wood they spring and scream,  
 Scald the milk, upset the cream, . . .  
 Oh the feathers jewel-bright !  
 Alas ! my life was never light."

The shrill flames nodded, beckoned, then lay dead ;  
 Her wig awry, cross Poll Troy nods her head.

The long dark corridors seem shadow-groves  
 Wherein a little courtier air still roves. . . .

Pale rose-leaves, wet and scented, seems the rain,  
 Whose bright drops cease, as soft as sleep again.

Her gown seems like a pale and tuneful rose,

. . . . .

Hours passed ; the soft melodious moonlight  
 grows. . . .

A murmurous sound of far-off Circean seas  
 And old enchantments and the growth of trees.

. . . . .

Across the silver grass the powdered ghosts  
Are wandering in dim and scattered hosts

Among the woods and fields, and they forget  
Everything but that their love's hand yet

Is touching theirs ; the ribbons of the moon are blue  
And pink ; those ghosts pick bunches from the dew

Of ghostly flowers, all poignant with spring rain,  
Smelling of youth that will not come again.

### XXIII

THE public Scribe, noctambulo,  
Where moonlight, cold as blades of grass  
Echoes upon deserted walls  
Turned his dusty folio. . . .  
Dry grass that cackles thin in Hell  
The spires of fire . . . his nightcap fell. . . .

Doctor Gradus  
Mounts Parnassus  
On that dusty ass the Law ;  
His hair is grey  
As asses' ears,  
The cold wind's bray  
He never hears. . . .  
O'er donkey's hide grass the attorney  
Still continues on his journey

With the dusty Law's proceedings,  
Through the old forrestial readings  
For the Town of Troy  
Prince Paris lost when yet a boy.

Il Dottore in the long grass  
Culls the simples,—cold henbane,  
Nettles that make fevers pass,  
Wood-spurge that will cure a blain.

He walks where weeds have covered all. . . .  
The moon's vast echoes die  
Across the plain where weeds grown tall  
Pearled treasures of Asia seem,  
Sunk in an endless dream.

And the mandarins in Asia,  
In the silken palace of the moon,  
Are all who are left to drink this physic  
That will restore them from a swoon.

## XXIV

NIGHT passed, and in that world of leaves  
The Dawn came, rustling like corn-sheaves ;

And a small wind came like little Boy-blue  
Over the cornfield and rustling through  
The large leaves. . . . Oh, how very deep  
The old queen is sighing in her sleep :

“ Alas, blue wind,  
Bluebeard unkind,

Why have you blown so far from me  
Through the jewelled blue leaves that sound like the  
    sea,

The lady Margotte,  
The goosegirl Gargotte  
Agog with curiosity ?

They played Troy Town on the palace wall . . .  
Like small grape hyacinths were their curls  
And thin as the spring wind were those girls—  
But now they never come if I call.”

The kingly cock with his red-gold beard,  
And his red-gold crown had crowed unheard

While his queens ruffled down  
Their feathered gown  
Beside the waterfall's crystal town ;

The cock, the dawn-fruits, the gold corn,  
Sing this aubade, cold, forlorn :

“ Jane, Jane,  
Forget the pain  
In your heart. Go work again.

Light is given that you may  
Work till owl-soft dusk of day.

The morning light whines on the floor, . . .  
No one e'er will cross the door,

No one ever cares to know  
How ragged flowers like you do grow.

Like beaux and belles about the Court  
King James the Second held, athwart

The field the sheep run,—foolish graces,  
Periwigs, long Stuart faces,

While ragged-robin, cockscomb flowers  
Cluck beneath the crystal showers.

A far-off huntsman sounds his horn  
That sounds like rain, harsh and forlorn ;

Pink as his coat, poor robin seems. . . .  
Jane, no longer lie in dreams.

The crude pink stalactites of rain  
Are sounding from the boughs again,

Each sighs the name of Harriet, Mary,  
Susan, Anne, grown cold and wary—

Never yours. Once, bright and gay,  
They used to whisper ‘ Come away,’

But now they have forgotten why.  
Come, no longer sleeping lie.

Jane, Jane,  
Forget the pain  
In your heart. Go work again ! ”

No answer came. No footsteps now will climb  
 Down from Jane's attic. She forgets the time,  
 Her wages, plainness, and how none could love  
 A maid with cockscomb hair, in Sleep's dark grove.

## XXV

AND now the brutish forests close around  
 The beauty sleeping in enchanted ground.

All night, the harsh bucolic winds that grunt  
 Through those green curtains, help me in my hunt.

Oh the swinish hairy beasts  
 Of the rough wind  
 (Wild boars tearing through the forests) !  
 Nothing they will find

But stars like empty wooden nuts,  
 In leaves green and shrill.  
 Home they go to their rough sty  
 The clouds . . . and home go I.

Above the wooden shutters  
 Of my room at morn,  
 Like bunches of the country flowers  
 Seem the fresh dawn hours.

And the young dawn creeps  
 Tiptoe through my room, . . .  
 Never speaks of one who sleeps  
 In the forest's gloom.

## XXVI

THE gardener played his old bagpipe  
 To make the melons and the peaches ripe. . . .  
 The threads are mixed in a tartan sound . . .  
 "Keep, my lad, to the good safe ground.  
 For Jonah long since was a felon,  
 With guineas gold as a grape or melon.  
 He always said his prayers in Latin  
 To peaches like red quilted satin ;  
 And he had four and twenty daughters,  
 As lovely as the thick-fleeced waters  
 Or the Hesperides' thick-leaved trees—  
 And they were lovely as the evening breeze.  
 One Sabbath roamed that godless man  
 Beneath the great trees sylvan wan,  
 And met an ancient satyr crone,  
 Cold as the droning wind the drone  
 Hears when the thickest gold will thrive,  
 Summer-long, in the combs of the honey-hive.  
 She said, 'You must sail, as I understand,  
 To better yourself in a Better Land.'  
 The sea was sharper than green grass,  
 The sailors would not let him pass,  
 And the sea was wroth and rose at him  
 Like the turreted walls of Jerusalem,  
 Or like the towers and gables seen  
 In the midst of a deep-boughed garden green.  
 If my old bagpipe I blew  
 It would not blow those great towers down.  
 The sailors took and bound him, threw  
 Him in among those towers to drown.



And oh, far best," the gardener said,  
" Like fruits to lie in your kind bed,  
To sleep as snug as in the grave  
In your kind bed, and shun the wave,  
Nor ever sigh for a strange land  
And songs no heart can understand."

## THE DRUM

(THE NARRATIVE OF THE DEMON OF TEDWORTH)

IN his tall senatorial,  
 Black and manorial,  
 House where decoy-duck  
 Dust doth clack—  
 Clatter and quack  
 To a shadow black,—  
 Said the musty Justice Mompesson  
 “What is that dark stark beating drum  
 That we hear rolling like the sea?”  
 “It is a beggar with a pass  
 Signed by you.” “I signed not one.”  
 They took the ragged drum that we  
 Once heard rolling like the sea;  
 In the house of the Justice it must lie  
 And usher in Eternity.

. . . . .

Is it black night?  
 Black as Hecate howls a star  
 Wolfishly, and whined  
 The wind from very far.

In the pomp of the Mompesson house is one  
 Candle that lolls like the midnight sun,

Or the coral comb of a cock ; . . . it rocks. .  
 Only the goatish snow's locks  
 Watch the candles lit by fright  
 One by one through the black night.

Through the kitchen there runs a hare—  
 Whinnying, whines like grass, the air ;  
 It passes ; now is standing there  
 A lovely lady . . . see her eyes—  
 Black angels in a heavenly place,  
 Her shady locks and her dangerous grace.

“ I thought I saw the wicked old witch in  
 The richest gallipot in the kitchen ! ”  
 A lolloping galloping candle confesses.  
 “ Outside in the passage are wildernesses  
 Of darkness rustling like witches' dresses.”

Out go the candles one by one  
 Hearing the rolling of a drum !

What is the march we hear groan  
 As the hoofèd sound of a drum marched on  
 With a pang like darkness, with a clang  
 Blacker than an orang-outang ?  
 “ Heliogabalus is alone,—  
 Only his bones to play upon ! ”

The mocking money in the pockets  
 Then turned black . . . now caws  
 The fire . . . outside, one scratched the door  
 As with iron claws,—

Scratching under the children's bed  
And up the trembling stairs . . . " Long dead "  
Moaned the water black as crape.  
Over the snow the wintry moon  
Limp as henbane, or herb paris,  
Spotted the bare trees ; and soon

Whinnying, neighed the maned blue wind  
Turning the burning milk to snow,  
Whining it shied down the corridor—  
Over the floor I heard it go  
Where the drum rolls up the stair, nor tarries.

## THE MAN WITH THE GREEN PATCH

LOOK through those periwigged green trees  
At the tall house . . . impressions seize !

Trees periwigged and snuffy ; old  
Is silence, with its tales all told  
And Time is shrunken, bare and cold,

And here the malefactor Death  
Snuffs out the candle with our breath.

. . . . .

The Admiral had soon returned  
From active service ; “ home to die,”  
Said he, a patch upon one eye.  
The green shade of Death’s own yew-tree,  
So sightless, seemed that shade to me.

All day in the limp helpless breeze  
Beneath the empty platform trees  
He sits with Brobdignagian asses  
Talking while the lame time passes,—  
And each voice seemed the hard trombone  
Of harsh seas (blue and white dead bone).  
He speaks of friendships long ago  
With fairy aristocracies  
Who dream in murmurous palaces  
Haunted by gold eyes,—Chinese,  
And apes superior to man,  
Whose life outlives our mortal span,

And all the strange inhabitants  
 Of gardens under leaf-like seas,  
 And the Admiral Yang among his plants  
 Asking his god what no one grants  
 When the gold rain begins to fall.

But that green shade of Death's yew-tree,  
 His patch, will never let him see  
 The real world terrible and old  
 Where seraphs in the mart are sold  
 And fires from Bedlam's madness flare  
 Like blue palm-leaves in desert air ;  
 The prisons where the maimed men pined  
 Because their mothers bore them blind,—  
 Starved men so thin they seem to be  
 The shadow of that awful Tree  
 Cast down on us from Calvary.

Beside the sea, blue-white harsh bone  
 Hard as a ship's deck, while the lone  
 Great sun with flames like leaves flares slow  
 In an empty sky like the great Mikado,  
 The Admiral is lulling these  
 Unreal owlsh people there  
 Who though asleep, still sit and stare,  
 Their dullard faces planet-round  
 Fringed all leafily with sound  
 Growth of their long heritage  
 Beasthood, but grown tame with age.

The admiral is such a bore  
 Sleep murmurs, flows in the heart's core.

Gold as a planet system, rain  
 Falls in the gardens once again.  
 The cook as red as an aubergine  
 Sleeps in her kitchen, fall'n between  
 Two clear-scrubbed wooden kitchen tables  
 Where creep the growing vegetables . . .  
 Crowned are they, and rough and bold. . . .  
 The ass-hide grass grows over her ears  
 And Midas Silence turns to gold  
 Each little sound she never hears.  
 The rain is gold as a planet system  
 Or the silent gardens of the Khan,  
 And all the world is changed to a green  
 Growing world to be touched and seen,  
 And the folk in the caves of far Japan  
 Hear the triumphant growing sound  
 And say, " Are the gold melon flowers we see,  
 The sunrise sound, young pleasure isles,  
 The soft wind from an incense tree,  
 Or the gold Mikado's shadowy smiles ? "

But the ancient Admiral was loath  
 To see or hear or dream of growth. . . .  
 For his existence was not life  
 But a tired stranger's conversations  
 (Modulated dull gradations)  
 With Life, that sleepy old housewife.

And all night long he lies and cowers . . .  
 Pink moonlight turns to feathered flowers,  
 And sleep should be a coral cave  
 Haunted by a siren wave.

Yet moonlight lies as harsh as brine  
 Noah's Flood on a disused saltmine;  
 Cold airs prick like grass or the sword  
 Of zanies . . . he falls overboard  
 Into that briny Noah's Flood  
 The moonlight, drowning bestial blood.

His house is haunted by the shade  
 Of Death,—no greenness in earth laid . . .  
 But a monstrous difference agape  
 Between the nations of the Dead,  
 A ghost that ne'er took human shape  
 But has a swinish pig-tailed head  
 Crowned with trembling ghostly flowers. . .  
 It seems a candle guttered down  
 In a green deserted town.

It can alter at its will—  
 Bat-like to the window-sill  
 It will cling, with squeaking shrill  
 Miming Triviality.

Or, shapeless now as a black sea,  
 Clattering a hellish hoof  
 With the other dragging after,  
 (Elephantine, muffled o'er) . . .  
 Oh, that tread breaks down the floor!  
 And we shall hear its numbing speech—  
 A roar that will break down the world,  
 A speech unknown of the race of Man.

The Admiral hears through his door  
 That shape flow down the corridor . . .



He trembles when the ghost wind comes . .  
Outside, among the tallest trees  
The grey flowers hang  
Like a snipe's plumes, clang  
In the wrinkled and the withered breeze.

Come softly and we will look through  
The windows from this avenue . . .  
For there, my youth passed like a sleep,  
Yet in my heart, still murmuring deep,  
The small green airs from Eternity  
Murmuring softly, never die.

# METAMORPHOSIS

THE coral-cold snow seemed the Parthenon,  
Huge peristyle of temples that are gone,  
And dark as Asia, now, is Beauty's daughter  
The rose, once clear as music o'er deep water.

Now the full moon her fire and light doth spill  
On turkey-plumaged leaves and window-sill,

On leaves that seem the necks and plumes of urban  
Turkeys, each a Sultan in a turban,

And strawberries among the beavers' wool,  
(So grass seemed where that ruined temple's cool

Shade fell). When first the dew with golden foot  
Makes tremble every leaf and strawberry root

The rainbow gives those berries light above,  
The dark rose gives them all her secret love,

Until those coral tears of the rich light  
Hold roses, rubies, rainbows for the sight.

My ancient shadow nods a turbaned head ;  
One candle through thick leaves throws a gold thread ;

The dark green country temple of the snows  
Hides porphyry bones of nymphs whence grew the  
rose,

And dark green dog-haired leaves of strawberries,  
All marked with maps of unknown lands and seas,

And that small negro page, the cross dark quail,  
Chasing the ghosts of dairymaids that fail

In butter-yellow dew by Georgian stables,  
(The snow, dark green as strawberry leaves, ha-  
gables).

But Time, a heavy ghost, groans through thick leaves,  
Time is a weary bell which ever grieves,

It is not Death which is the skeleton—  
But Time ; Death merely strikes the hour of one,

Night's creeping end ere light begins again.  
O Death has never worm for heart and brain

Like that which Time conceives to fill his grave,  
Devouring the last faith, the word love gave,

Changing the light in eyes to heavy tears,  
Changing the beat in heart to empty years

Wherein we listen for that little sound  
Of footsteps that come never to our ground.

How terrible these winter nights must be  
To the deserted Dead . . . if we could see

The eternal anguish of the skeleton,  
So fleshless even the dog leaves it alone,

Atridæ-like devouring its own blood  
 With hopeless love beneath the earth's blind hood :  
 For warmth, the rags of flesh about the bone  
 Devoured by black disastrous dreams, alone

The worm is their companion, vast years  
 Pile mountain-high above, and the last tears

Freeze to gigantic polar nights of ice  
 Around the heart through crumbling centuries.

O Dead, your heart is gone, it cannot weep !  
 From decency the skeleton must sleep ;

O heart, shrink out of sight, you have no flesh  
 For love or dog or worm to court afresh,

Only your youthful smile is mirrored lone  
 In that eternity, the skeleton.

For never come they now, nor comes the hour  
 When your lips spoke, and winter broke in flower,

The Parthenon was built by your dead kiss.  
 What should they seek, now you are changed to this

Vast craggy bulk, strong as the prophet's rock ?  
 No grief tore waters from that stone to mock  
 Death's immobility, and changed to stone  
 Those eyelids see one sight and one alone.

What do they see ? Some lost and childish kiss  
 In summers ere they knew that love was this,

The terrible Gehenna of the bone  
Deserted by the flesh, tears changed to stone ?

Or do they blame us that we walk this earth,  
Who are more dead than they, nor seek rebirth

Nor change ? The snowflake's six-rayed star can set  
Rock-crystal's cold six-rayed eternity,—

Thus light grief melts in craggy waterfalls ;  
But mine melts never, though the last spring calls :

The polar night's huge boulder hath rolled this  
My heart, my Sisyphus, in the abyss.

Do the Dead know the nights wherein we grope  
From our more terrible abyss of hope  
To soft despair ? The nights when creeping Fear  
Crumples our hearts, knowing when age appear,

Our sun, our love, will leave us more alone  
Than the black mouldering rags about the bone ?

Age shrinks our hearts to ape-like dust . . . that  
Looks through the eyes where all death's chasms gaze

Between ourself and what we used to be.  
My soul, my Lazarus, know you not me ?

Am I so changed by Time's appalling night ?  
'Tis but my bone that cannot stand upright,

That leans as if it thirsted . . . for what spring,  
The ape's bent skeleton foreshadowing,

With head bent from the light, its only kiss ?  
Do the Dead know that metamorphosis,

When the appalling lion-claws of age  
With talons tear the cheek and heart, yet rage

For life devours the bone, a tigerish fire ?  
But quenched in the vast empire of the mire

These craters cry not to the eternal bone :  
The Dead may hide the changing skeleton.

So quench the light, my Lazarus, nor see  
The thing we are, the thing that we might be :

In mouldering cerements of that thick grave,  
Our flesh, we lose the one light that could save.

But yet it shall avail, that grass shall sing  
From loveless bones in some foreshadowed spring,

And summer break from a long-shadowed kiss  
Though our dry bones are sunless grown as this,

And eyeless statues, broken and alone  
In shadeless avenues, the music gone,  
We stand . . . the leaves we knew are black as jet,  
Though the light scatters feathers on them yet,

Remembering sylvan nymphs . . . Death is our clime,  
And, among heavy leaves, our bell to chime—

Death is our sun, illumining our old  
Dim-jewelled bones—Death is our winter cold ;

Yet sighs of voyages and landing stages  
From unknown seas, and sylvan equipages,

And of a clime where Death's light on the eyes  
Could make each shapeless lump of clay grow wise,

The topaz, sapphires, diamonds of the bone,  
That mineral in our earth's dark mine, alone  
Leap to the eastern light . . . Death-blinded eyes  
See beyond wild bird-winged discoveries.

Death is the Sun's heat making all men black :  
O Death, the splendours die in the leaves' track :

All men are Ethiopian shades of thee :  
The wild and glittering fleece Parthenope

Loosened, more rich than feathers of bright birds,  
Though rich and thick as Ethiopian herds

Died like the wave, or early light that grew  
In eastern quarries ripening precious dew.\*

Though lovely are the tombs of the dead nymphs  
On the heroic shore, the glittering plinths  
Of jacinth, hyacinthine waves profound  
Sigh of the beauty out of sight and sound,

And many a golden foot that pressed the sand,  
The panoply of suns on distant strand ;

Panōpe walking like the pomp of waves  
With plumaged helmet near the fountain caves

\* Dryden's "Annus Mirabilis."

Is only now an arena for the worm ;  
Her golden flesh lies in the dust's frail storm,

And beauty water-bright for long is laid  
Deep in the empire of eternal shade ;

Only the sighing waves know now the plinth  
Of those deep tombs that were of hyacinth.

Still echoes of that helmeted bright hair  
Are like the pomp of tropic suns, the blare

That from the inaccessible horizon runs,  
The eternal music of heroic suns  
When their strong youth comes freshened from deep  
seas,  
And the first music heard among the trees.

By elephant trunks of the water, showers  
Now change to cornucopias of flowers ;

Panōpe with her dark majestic train  
Of nymphs walked like the pomp of waves, the main

Sees Asia, Parthenope, Eunomia,  
Euphrosyne, Urania, Ausonia,

In feathered head-dresses as bright as sleep,  
As onward with the pomp of waves they sweep,

In pelongs, chelloes, and great palampores,  
Gaze d'Ispahan and bulchauls, salampores,



In plumaged turbans, sweeping gros des Indes,  
That the long golden fingers of the winds

Pull by the waters paler than a pearl.  
The airs like rain-wet shrinking petals curl

And waves are freckled with gold ripples, these  
Seem golden spangles on the strawberries ;  
And black Bacchantes with their panached feathers  
Wear mittens with gold fringe bright as the weathers

Where elephant trunks of the water rear  
As the great pomp and train of nymphs draws near,

An ambassade of Amazons ; rich trees  
And Abyssinian glooms have fostered these.

But now Melpomene, Zenobia,  
The Amazons black as Ethiopia

In Pan's huge forests seem like statues tall,  
Where the thick jewels from the rich figs fall

In this vast empire of eternal shade  
Where leaves seem Memphis, Thebes, from music  
made.

In wooded gardens by each gardener's frame  
Dark wrinkled satyrs with long straw beards came,

Dark honey from rough cups of straw to sip,  
And every straw cup has an amber lip.

The gardener, wrinkled, dark, beside a cave  
Sways branches gold-mosaic'd as the wave

And finds these are with satyrs' straw beards twined  
By that gold-fingered arborist, the wind.

And there beside the greenest, shaggiest caves,  
As green as melons hiding honey waves,

The rose that shone like the first light of tears  
Was once a buskined bright nymph in lost years,

And from the amber dust that was a rose  
In the green heat Parthenope still grows.

In this green world the melons' dogskin flowers,  
Leaves green as country temples, snare the hours,

And dew seems butter-yellow, the bright mesh  
Of dear and dead Panōpe's golden flesh

Where grapes and apples boom like emerald rain  
In green baize forests, and the sylvan train

Of country nymphs wear yellow petticoats  
Looped over leathern gaiters ; long hair floats,  
Cream-coloured and as thick as ponies' manes,  
Through swan-soft great mauve leaves where Jove's  
gold rains

Still fly ; rich strawberries are honeyed cold  
By all Pan's honey and Palmyra's gold

And in the laughing green the rich fruits ran  
With gilded honeyed blood of Phœbus, Pan.

But now the branches droop their melancholy  
And owl-soft dusk upon this summer folly ;

And under trees that were as fresh and green  
As laughing nymphs' guitar and mandoline

(When country nymphs wore yellow petticoats  
Looped over leathern gaiters, long hair floats

From straw hats trimmed with pheasants' feathers  
twined

By the long golden fingers of the wind) ;

The broken country statue Corydon  
Gilded by Phœbus, with his straw flute gone

Stands in the cocks of snow, once cocks of hay  
Gilded and rustling o'er that green land lay ;

And shadows brush the statue, not the snowy  
Winged bees Sylvia and Thisbe, Chloe,

That sang sweet country songs in owl-dusked leaves :  
" Poor Rose is dying " and " Sweet Sultan grieves."

But Time drifts owl-dusk o'er the brightest eyes  
And dulls the sleepy gods and the sad wise,

And shall despoil our woods and monuments  
And make them like the small bees' cerements . . .

And heavy is dark Time, that ever moans  
Among thick leaves his mournful overtones.

Now the snow lies upon my rose-shaped heart,  
And on the years, and many a glittering chart

The dog-furred strawberry leaves bear—maps from  
dream

To dream—and berries with Orion's gleam.

This dark green country temple of the snows  
Hides still the amber dust of nymph and rose,

The melons' dogskin flowers where the mellow,  
Whining early dew is butter-yellow,

And the nymphs' smooth-eared hound, far from the  
light,

When early dew whines hound-like as in fright.

I looked out from my window where the urban  
Leaves seemed turkeys, (Sultans in a turban),  
Across the lake where, cupolas and gables,  
The ripples seemed deserted Georgian stables ;

And my old shadow nods a turbaned head,  
The full moon sees one candle's thick gold thread

Pierce through the thick leaves near the window sill,  
Where she, her lovely fire and light doth spill.

The rose that shone like the first light of tears  
Is faded, and its leaves, bright as the years

When we knew life and love and youth, are wet  
With tears beneath the shady winter. Yet

Although the small immortal serpent cries  
“ I, only, know if Plato still be wise,

Great golden Hector had the pomp and pride  
Of waves, but like the strength of these, he died ;

And the first soundless wrinkles fall like snow  
On many a golden cheek, and none may know,

Seeing your ancient wrinkled shadow-shape,  
If this be long-dead Venus or an ape,”

To patience with the apeish dust I came  
Seeing this mimicry of death a game ;  
Since all things have beginnings ; the bright plume  
Was once thin grass in shady winter's gloom

And the furred fire is barking for the shape  
Of hoarse-voiced animals ; cold air agape

Whines to be shut in water's shape and plumes ;  
All this is hidden in the winter's glooms.

I too from ruined walls hung upside down  
And, bat-like, only saw Death's ruined town

And mumbling crumbling dust . . . I saw the people  
Mouthing blindly for the earth's blind nipple.

Their thick sleep dreams not of the infinite  
Wild strength the grass must have to find the light

With all the bulk of earth across its eyes  
And strength, and the huge weight of centuries.

Hate-hidden by a monk's cowl of ape's pelf,  
Bear-clumsy and appalling, mine own self  
Devouring, blinded by the earth's thick hood  
I crouched, Atridæ-like devoured my blood

And knew the anguish of the skeleton  
Deserted by the flesh, with Death alone.

Then my immortal Sun rose, Heavenly Love,  
To rouse my carrion to life, and move

The polar night, the boulder that rolled this,  
My heart, my Sisyphus, in the abyss.

Come then, my Sun, to melt the eternal ice  
Of Death, and crumble the thick centuries,  
Nor shrink, my soul, as dull wax owlsh eyes  
In the sun's light, before my sad eternities.

## EIGHT SONGS

### TO MY SISTER GEORGIA

#### I.—DAPHNE

HEAT of the sun that maketh all men black,—  
 They are but Ethiopian shades of thee—  
 Pour down upon this wild and glittering fleece  
 That is more rich than feathers of bright birds  
 The ripening gems, the drops of the still night.  
 I parch for that still shade, my heat of love  
 That parched those ripening gems hath withered me.

Come with the African pomp and train of waves,  
 Give me your darkness, my immortal shade,  
 Beside the waterwells my heart hath known.  
 The shepherds hairy-rough as satyrs come,  
 Bring up their fleeces that are waterfull  
 With freshness clear as precious gums of trees  
 Where weep the incense trees from some deep  
     smart,  
 So the fresh water from your fleece flows in  
 To fill with richness all my desert heart.

#### 2.—THE SYLPH'S SONG

“THE cornucopia of Ceres  
 I seek not, fading not for these,

But fair Pomona, gardener's daughter,  
Laughing like bird-feathered water.

Amid this hot green glowing gloom  
A word falls with a rain-drop's boom;

And baskets of ripe fruit in air  
The bird-songs seem, suspended where

Those goldfinches, the ripe warm lights,  
Peck slyly at them, take quick flights.

I bring you branches green with dew  
And fruits that you may crown anew

Your waspish-gilded hair until  
That cornucopia doth spill

Dew, and your warm lips bear the stains,  
And bird-blood leap within your veins.

Pomona, lovely gardener's daughter,  
Fruits like ripples of the water

Soon will fade . . . then leave your fruits,  
Smooth as your cheek or the birds' flutes,

And in this lovelier smoother shade  
Listen to my serenade."

### 3.—THE PEACH TREE

BETWEEN the amber portals of the sea  
The gilded fleece of heat hangs on my tree ;

My skin is bright as this . . .

Come, wind, and smooth my skin, bright as your kiss !



Less bright, less bright than Fatima's gold skin,  
 My gilded fleece that sighs  
 ' She is the glittering dew born of the heat,  
 She is that young gazelle, the leaping Sun of Paradise'

Come, Nubian shade, smooth the gilt fleece's curl,  
 Until your long dark fluid hands unfold  
 My peach, that cloud of gold,  
 Its kernel, crackling amber water-cold.

Shine, Fatima, my Sun, show your gold face  
 Through panached ostrich plumes of leaves, the  
     from above  
 My ripening fruits will feel the bright dew fall apart  
 Till at your feet I pour my golden love.

#### 4.—THE STRAWBERRY

BENEATH my dog-furred leaves you see  
 The creeping strawberry  
 In a gold net  
 The footprints of the dew have made more wet.

Mahomet resting on a cloud of gold  
 Dreamed of the strawberry  
 Made of the purpling gauzy heat  
 And jasper dust trod by his golden feet,—

The jasper dust beside  
 The fountain tide,

The water jacinth-cold,  
 The water-ripples like mosaics gold  
 Have made my green leaves wide and water-cold.

From palaces among the widest leaves  
 My Sun, my Fatima,  
 Shows her gold face and sighs,  
 And darkness dies.

At noon my Fatima, my bright gazelle,  
 Walks by each gauzy bell  
 Of strawberries made of such purpling air  
 As the heat knows, and there

When Fatima, my dew with golden foot,  
 Comes like all the music of the air  
 Then shine my berries till those golden footsteps  
 die—  
 Like all the glittering desert of the air when the hot  
 sun goes by.

#### 5.—THE GREENGAGE TREE

FROM gold-mosaic'd wave  
 And from the fountain cave  
 Grew my dark-plumaged leaves all green and fountain-  
 cold,  
 My minarets of gold,  
 Mosaic'd like the tomb,  
 Far in the forest gloom,  
 Of water-lovely Fatima in forests far away.  
 The gardener doth sway

The branches and doth find  
 (As wrinkled dark and kind  
 As satyrs) these with satyrs' straw beards twined  
 By that gold-fingered arborist the wind.

Among thick leaves the shade  
 Seems like a cavalcade,  
 Or Artemis plume-helmeted from sylvan serenade,  
 Or Amazons' ambassade.

A Caliph plays a lute,  
 A gardener plays a flute,  
 Then from my feathered stem a most delightful gush  
     a glittering sea  
 Grows in my rich fruit.

And each bird-angel comes  
 To sip dark honey from my plums,  
 My rich green amber gums  
 That make puffed feather sleeves, long feather  
     skirts all gold,  
 And sticky from the dew my golden net doth hold.

## 6.—THE NECTARINE TREE

THIS rich and swanskin tree has grown  
 From the nymphs' amber blood and bone.

What laughter falls like rain or tears  
 Among my boughs, what golden shears ?

Come gardener, and tie  
 With your long beard of bass,

So like the winds' fair hair  
 The pillars of my tree, and win  
 The wind to me.

Smooth as the amber skin  
 Of fair Parthenope,  
 And that smooth nymph that changed into a tree  
 Each swan-soft silver skin,  
 Or like Parthenope's smooth voice that falls like  
     amber,  
 Or moonlight falling in her deep sea-tinselled chamber.

#### 7.—THE CHERRY TREE

WHY has the Shepherdess black with the Sun  
 Locks fair as a sheepskin waterfall? . . . Run,  
 Glittering wind from my cherry tree,  
 And call her, call her, to me.

Wind, pull at her sheepskin waterfall locks . . .  
 These coral tears  
 So rich and bright  
 Will change her whom the Sun made black  
 To the Ethiopian splendour night.

#### 8.—THE SERENADE AT MORNING

*A Page sings :*  
 "BIRD-BREASTED flutes by the green waterfalls,  
 The green bird-bosomed waterfalls,  
 Sound where the roses, flaxen fruits, sing madrigals.

Now in this smoother greener shade  
Listen to my serenade.

Where still the squirrel shadows brush the leaves  
My carriage-wheels are like the gilt wheat-sheaves.

The smiles like water flash . . .  
And, cataracts that dash,  
My horses' hoofs  
Seem, and the carriage seems the sun's gold phaeton,  
    sheaves  
Of corn enwreathe it, trails of buds and leaves.

But in your gold-touched house you still do keep,  
Like the bright Sun, a leaf-pavilioned sleep.

The Sun that blackamoor, dark page,  
Plays on his flute till through the golden cage  
Of the bright wind beneath your window tall  
The gilded spangles fall.

The gardener waters your bright orange-tree  
And each gold water-drop seems a dark drowsy bee.

The Sun, that blackamoor,  
Comes in a bird-mask  
With a bird-flute, and asks  
Which is the gilded Fleece and which the long and  
    legendary Sea,  
The Sleeper's tangled hair or water-cold gold orange  
    tree.

Then from the perfumed stem and wind-smooth fruits  
do pour

Such amber tears as the rich Sun doth weep  
Among his thick pavilion of leaves  
In his deep noonday sleep.

I sang of country pleasures when great Pan  
With Faunus tumbled and like rough bears ran.

Gilt tents of hay bear butter-yellow dew,  
And leaves bear green bird-breasted dew that flew

To whisper at a maiden's leafy sill  
Of country love among the leaves, the chill

Of eve ; the squirrel-shadows brush the leaves  
And the bees' nests are rustling like gilt sheaves ;  
On squirrel-ruddy grass the satyrs roam,  
Wag beards of straw, suck honey from the comb,

In Pan's huge forest . . . country temples green  
The huge leaves seem, their gold-mosaic'd sheen  
Is dark as honeycombs . . . the bees write ' Corydon '  
And ' Amaryllis ' with gold honeycombs upon

The tents of country hay and roses' leaves ;  
And there the butter seems like gilded sheaves,

The winds, those honeyed thieves, from each rose-bell  
Steal honey that is dark as Philomel.

But in your golden house  
Not even the Sun doth rouse  
You, though among the corn,  
Rustling like the morn,

The reapers with the green bird-blood within their  
veins

And shadows green as leaves that stain  
Their apple-bright and ruddy flesh, again

Wake, the bird-breasted greenest dew  
Lay like a bird and flew  
Dying upon the leaves and sighing  
Of country love that in the earth is lying.

‘ Green dew, bird-breasted dew,  
Fly, fly into her breast,  
Sing to her through the leaves  
And window eaves  
Until she too shall turn into a bird,  
Fly like a bird to me,  
And seek her rest  
Among my greenest leaves.’

I heard

That golden-fingered arborist the Shade  
Among those green leaves sigh this serenade.”

## FOUR ELEGIES

### I.—THE HAMBONE AND THE HEART

TO PAVEL TCHELITCHEW

*A Girl speaks :*

“HERE in this great house in the barrack square,  
The plump and heart-shaped flames all stare  
Like silver empty hearts in wayside shrines.  
No flame warms ever, shines,  
Nor may I ever tire.

Outside, the dust of all the dead,  
Thick on the ground is spread  
Covering the tinsel flowers  
And pretty dove-quick hours,

Among the round leaves, Cupid-small  
Upon the trees so wise and tall.  
O dust of all the dead, my heart has known  
That terrible Gehenna of the bone  
Deserted by the flesh,—with Death alone !

Could we foretell the worm within the heart,  
That holds the households and the parks of heaven,  
Could we foretell that land was only earth,  
Would it be worth the pain of death and birth,  
Would it be worth the soul from body riven ?



For here, my sight, my sun, my sense,  
 In my gown white as innocence,  
 I walked with you. Ah, that my sun  
 Loved my heart less than carrion.

Alas ! I dreamed that the bare heart could feed  
 One who with death's corruption loved to breed,—  
 This Dead, who fell, that he might satisfy  
 The hungry grave's blind need,—

That Venus stinking of the Worm !  
 Deep in the grave, no passions storm :  
 The worm's a pallid thing to kiss ;  
 She is the hungering grave that is

Not filled, that is not satisfied !  
 Not all the sunken Dead that lies  
 Corrupt there, chills her luxuries.

And fleet, and volatile her kiss,  
 For all the grave's eternities !  
 And soon another Dead shall slake  
 Her passion, till that dust, too, break.

Like little pigeons small dove-breasted flowers,  
 Were cooing of far-off bird-footed showers,  
 My coral neck was pink as any rose  
 Or like the sweet pink honey-wax that grows,  
 Or the fresh coral beams of clear moonlight,  
 Where leaves like small doves flutter from our sight.

Beneath the twisted rose-boughs of the heat  
 Our shadows walked like little foreigners,

Like small unhappy children dressed in mourning,  
 They listened by the serres-chaudes waterfalls  
 But could not understand what we were saying,  
 Nor could we understand their whispered warning,—  
 There by the waterfalls we saw the Clown,  
 As tall as Heaven's golden town,  
 And in his hands, a Heart, and a Hambone  
 Pursued by loving vermin ; but deserted, lone,  
 The Heart cried to my own :

*The Heart speaks :*

Young girl, you dance and laugh to see,  
 The thing that I have come to be.  
 Oh, once this heart was like your own.  
 Go, pray that yours may turn to stone.

This is the murdered heart of one  
 Who bore and loved an only son.  
 For him, I worked away mine eyes,  
 My starved breast could not still his cries.

My little lamb, of milk bereft . . .  
 My heart was all that I had left.  
 Ah, could I give thee this for food,  
 My lamb, thou knowest that I would.

Yet lovely was the summer light  
 Those days . . . I feel it through this night.  
 Once Judas had a childish kiss,  
 And still his mother knows but this.

He grew to manhood. Then one came,  
 False-hearted as Hell's blackest shame

To steal my child from me, and thrust  
The soul I loved down to the dust.

Her hungry wicked lips were red  
As that dark blood my son's hand shed ;  
Her eyes were black as Hell's own night ;  
Her ice-cold breast was winter-white.

I had put by a little gold  
To bury me when I was cold.  
That fangèd wanton kiss to buy,  
My son's love willed that I should die.

The gold was hid beneath my bed,—  
So little, and my weary head  
Was all the guard it had. They lie  
So quiet and still who soon must die.

He stole to kill me while I slept,  
The little son who never wept,  
But that I kissed his tears away  
So fast, his weeping seemed but play.

So light his footfall. Yet I heard  
Its echo in my heart and stirred  
From out my weary sleep to see  
My child's face bending over me.

The wicked knife flashed serpent-wise,  
Yet I saw nothing but his eyes  
And heard one little word he said,  
Go echoing down among the Dead.

They say the Dead may never dream.  
 But yet I heard my pierced heart scream  
 His name within the dark. They lie  
 Who say the Dead can ever die.

For in the grave I may not sleep,  
 For dreaming that I hear him weep.  
 And in the dark, my dead hands grope  
 In search of him. O barren hope !

I cannot draw his head to rest,  
 Deep down upon my wounded breast ;  
 He gave the breast that fed him well  
 To suckle the small worms of Hell.

The little wicked thoughts that fed  
 Upon the weary helpless Dead,  
 They whispered o'er my broken heart,—  
 They struck their fangs deep in the smart.

“The child she bore with bloody sweat  
 And agony has paid his debt.  
 Through that bleak face the stark winds play,  
 The crows have chased his soul away,—

His body is a blackened rag  
 Upon the tree,—a monstrous flag,”  
 Thus one worm to the other saith,  
 Those slow mean servitors of Death,

They chuckling, said : “Your soul grown blind  
 With anguish, is the shrieking wind

That blows the flame that never dies  
About his empty lidless eyes."

I tore them from my heart, I said :  
"The life-blood that my son's hand shed—  
That from my broken heart outburst,  
I'd give again to quench his thirst.

He did no sin. But cold blind earth  
The body was that gave him birth.  
All mine, all mine the sin. The love  
I bore him was not deep enough."

. . . . .

*The Girl speaks :*

O crumbling heart, I too, I too have known  
The terrible Gehenna of the bone  
Deserted by the flesh. . . . I too have wept  
Through centuries like the deserted bone  
To all the dust of all the Dead to fill  
That place. . . . It would not be the dust I loved.

For underneath the lime-tree's golden town  
Of Heaven, where he stood, the tattered Clown  
Holding the screaming Heart and the Hambone,  
You saw the Clown's thick hambone, life-pink  
carrion,  
That Venus perfuming the summer air.  
Old pigs, starved dogs, and long worms of the  
grave  
Were rooting at it, nosing at it there.

Then you, my sun, left me and ran to it  
Through pigs, dogs, grave-worms' ramparted tall  
waves.

. . . . .

I know that I must soon have the long pang  
Of grave-worms in the heart. . . . You are so  
changed,  
How shall I know you from the other long  
Anguishing grave-worms? I can but foretell  
The worm where once the kiss clung, and that last  
less chasm-deep farewell.

## 2.—THE LITTLE GHOST WHO DIED FOR LOVE FOR ALLANAH HARPER

Deborah Churchill, born in 1678, was hanged in 1708 for shielding her lover in a duel. His opponent was killed, her lover fled to Holland, and she was hanged in his stead, according to the law of the time. The chronicle said, "Though she died at peace with God, this malefactor could never understand the justice of her sentence, to the last moment of her life."

"FEAR not, O maidens, shivering  
As bunches of the dew-drenched leaves  
In the calm moonlight . . . it is the cold sends  
quivering  
My voice, a little nightingale that grieves.

Now Time beats not, and dead Love is forgotten . . .  
The spirit too is dead and dank and rotten,

And I forget the moment when I ran  
Between my lover and the sworded man—

Blinded with terror lest I lose his heart.  
The sworded man dropped, and I saw depart

Love and my lover and my life . . . he fled  
And I was strung and hung upon the tree.  
It is so cold now that my heart is dead  
And drops through time . . . night is too dark to see

Him still. . . . But it is spring ; upon the fruit-  
    boughs of your lips,  
Young maids, the dew like India's splendour drips,  
Pass by among the strawberry beds, and pluck the  
    berries

Cooled by the silver moon ; pluck boughs of cherries

That seem the lovely lucent coral bough  
(From streams of starry milk those branches grow)  
That Cassopeia feeds with her faint light,  
Like Ethiopia ever jewelled bright.

Those lovely cherries do enclose  
Deep in their sweet hearts the silver snows,

And the small budding flowers upon the trees  
Are filled with sweetness like the bags of bees.

Forget my fate . . . but I, a moonlight ghost,  
Creep down the strawberry paths and seek the lost

World, the apothecary at the Fair.  
I, Deborah, in my long cloak of brown  
Like the small nightingale that dances down  
The cherried boughs, creep to the doctor's bare  
Booth . . . cold as ivy in the air,

And, where I stand, the brown and ragged light  
Holds something still beyond, hid from my sight.

Once, plumaged like the sea, his swanskin head  
Had wintry white quills . . . 'Hearken to the  
Dead . . .

I was a nightingale, but now I croak  
Like some dark harpy hidden in night's cloak,  
Upon the walls ; among the Dead, am quick ;  
Oh, give me medicine, for the world is sick ;  
Not medicines, planet-spotted like fritillaries  
For country sins and old stupidities,  
Nor potions you may give a country maid  
When she is lovesick . . . love in earth is laid,  
Grown dead and rotten ' . . . so I sank me down,  
Poor Deborah in my long cloak of brown.  
Though cockcrow marches, crying of false dawns,  
Shall bury my dark voice, yet still it mourns  
Among the ruins,—for it is not I  
But this old world, is sick and soon must die ! ”

### 3.—THE LAMENT OF EDWARD BLASTOCK

FOR RICHARD ROWLEY

NOTE.—I took this story from the “ Newgate Calendar.” Edward Blastock suffered at Tyburn on the 26th of May, 1738. Being in the direst want, and seeing his sister and her children in an equal misery, he yielded to the solicitations of his sister's husband, and joined with him in becoming highwaymen. They went so far as to rob a gentleman of a few shillings. Then Edward Blastock, finding a warrant was out against him, took refuge in his sister's house.

She betrayed him to his death.

THE pang of the long century of rains,  
Melting the last flesh from the bone,



Cries to the heart : “ At least the bone remains,—  
If this alone.”

My bone cries to my mother’s womb :  
Why were you not my tomb ?  
Why was I born from the same womb as she  
Who sold my heart, my blood, who stole even my  
grave from me ?

I crept to steal in the rich man’s street  
That my sister’s starving babes might eat—

(Death, you have known such rags as hold  
The starved man’s heart together,—Death, you have  
known such cold !)

I crept to hide in my sister’s room,  
And dreamed it safe as my mother’s womb :

But there was a price upon the head  
Of one who stole that her babes might feed,

So my sister said, “ I must go to buy  
Us bread with this pence. . . .” And, for this, I die  
—Beyond my Death . . . with no grave to lie

In, hide my heart deep down in that hole.  
For my sister went to sell her soul

And my heart, and my life, and the love I gave. . . .  
She went to rob me of my grave.

And I would, I would the heart I gave  
Were dead and mouldering in that grave,

I would my name were quite forgot,  
 And my death dead beneath Death's rot.  
 But I'd give the last rag of my flesh  
 About my heart to the endless cold  
 Could I know again the childish kiss  
 My Judas gave of old—  
 Oh, Christ that hung between two men like me,—  
 Could I but know she was not this,—not this !

4.—THE GHOST WHOSE LIPS WERE WARM  
 FOR GEOFFREY GORER

"T. M., Esq., an old acquaintance of mine, hath assured me, that . . . after his first wife's death, as he lay in bed awake . . . his wife opened the Closet Door, and came into the Chamber by the Bed side, and looked upon him and stooped down and kissed him ; her Lips were warm, he fancied they would have been cold. He was about to have Embraced her, but was afraid it might have done him hurt. When she went from him, he asked her when he should see her again ? She turned about and smiled, but said nothing."—Miscellanies collected by John Aubrey, Esq., F.R.S., 1696.

"THE ice, weeping, breaks.  
 But my heart is underground.  
 And the ice of its dead tears melts never.    Wakes  
 No sigh, no sound,  
 From where the dead lie close, as those above—  
 The young—lie in their first deep night of love,  
 When the spring nights are fiery with wild dew, and  
       rest  
 Leaves on young leaves, and youthful breast on breast.  
 The dead lie soft in the first fire of spring  
 And through the eternal cold, they hear birds sing,

And smile as if the one long-treasured kiss  
Had worn away their once-loved lips to this

Remembered smile—for there is always one  
Kiss that we take to be our grave's long sun.

Once Time was but the beat of heart to heart;  
And one kiss burnt the imperfect woof apart

Of this dead world, and summer broke from this:  
We built new worlds with one immortal kiss.

Sun of my life, she went to warm the dead,  
And I must now go sunless in their stead.

They clothed a dead man in my dress. By day  
He walks the earth, by night he rots away;

So walks a dead man, waning, in my dress,  
By black disastrous suns of death grown less,

Grown dim and shrunken, wax before a fire,  
A shrunken apeish thing, blackened and dire.

This black disastrous sun yet hath no heat.  
How shall I bear my heart without its beat,

My clay without its soul, my eternal bone  
That cries to its deserting flesh, alone,

More cold than she is in her grave's long night,  
That hath my heart for covering, warmth, and light.

But when she had been twelve months in her grave  
She came where I lay in my bed : she gave

Her kiss. And oh, her lips were warm to me.  
And so I feared it, dared not touch and see

If still her heart were warm . . . dust-dun, death-  
cold

Lips should be from death's night. I dared not hold

That heart that came warm from the grave . .  
afraid,

I tore down all the earth of death, and laid

Its endless cold upon her heart. For this  
Dead man in my dress dared not kiss

Her who laid by death's cold, lest I  
Should feel it when she came to lie

Beside my heart. My dead love gave  
Lips warm with love though in her grave.

I stole her kiss, the only light  
She had to warm her eternal night."

## PRELUDE TO A FAIRY TALE

FOR H. R., TO WHOM I OWE MUCH OF THE KNOW-  
LEDGE CONTAINED IN THIS POEM

CLEAR as wistaria branches, waterfalls  
Droop by the lake ; each flashing bright bird calls  
The names of beauties that have long passed by,—  
Still mirrored in that lake . . . a long-drawn sigh. . . .

Alas that Tamburini, Malibran, forsake  
These waterfalls . . . the serres-chaudes of the lake  
Beside these cantatrice-like waterfalls  
See bunches of green grapes and leaves, with shawls

Of Spanish black lace ; hooded belles are seen  
In the Phœbus and the Sultan pelerine,—  
All kinds of watered silks those great sprays wet,—  
The gros de Sidon, foulard pekinet,

And Chine de Syr the wind loves ; trellises,  
All gilded by the heat, spangle the dresses  
With emerald grapes ; like flashing water, thin  
Cashmere Alvandar and nacré pekin

Show by the lake's clear temple and great domes  
In Venus' park where little Psyche roams.  
How like the Wall of China is that lake  
Reflecting Echo, but no sounds that wake !

And through the spreading branches of those grounds  
 You hear no sound of hunting horn and hounds  
 And see no stag. For no hounds ever bark  
 And no hares gallop in that leafy park.

Bright as the grass where mandarin-fish parch  
 Seems that Great Wall of China's dome and arch,  
 And drumming cascades sound of distant war  
 From caverns and from Echo's haunts afar.

The little path was yellow as nankin  
 And in the lake the small fish wave a fin ;  
 There, in the dreamy park, the palace stables  
 Of Georgian architecture, steeples, gables,

Watched, near the haycocks, country nymphs' gowns  
 float

Looped over a bright yellow petticoat  
 With leathern gaiters, and a carriage hat  
 That has bewildered many a leathern bat

In barns ; the wind, that little Savoyard,  
 Decked them with wild flowers à la montagnard ;  
 They haymake 'mid the marrows' dogskin flowers  
 And pumpkins where the dew now whines and cowers.

Came Master Cupid, knelt on the terrestrial,  
 Peaceful brink of that Empire Celestial,  
 The lake, and watched the small fish wave a fin,—  
 He wore his first long trousers of nankin.

A fish came like a little merry boy,—  
 He envied Master Cupid and his toy,—

He envied Master Cupid and his game.  
The fish and the young prince were dressed the  
same,—

White nankin trousers and a flat Scotch bonnet,—  
A thin blue frilly coat,—gilt buttons on it.  
As a boy climbs in thick-leaved apple-trees  
Where leaves and fruit shake in a little breeze,

So Master Cupid watched his young friend shake  
The great blue leafy branches of the lake.  
“ This endless lake seems like the Wall of China,”  
He told his gaping friend,—“ but larger, finer—

And bright as bluest grass where your life parches  
Seems that Great Wall of China’s domes and  
arches. . . .

When you are grown-up, will you like the best,  
Like Vulcan, my papa, a velvet vest ? ”

“ My uniform will, then, bear rows of stars  
To mimic the old grenadier god Mars,—  
With Nelson, Cæsar, Byron, and the rest ;  
The drumming cascades then will suit me best.”

Just then, the lovely lake’s vast park reflected  
Not at all what Cupid had expected.  
And Cupid ran to Vulcan : “ O papa !  
Come quick ! For I have seen Mars kiss Mama ! ”

Like Good Prince Albert’s seemed the gushing hair  
Of Papa’s bushed whiskers ; resting there  
They seemed like fireworks at the Crystal Palace  
Exploding sharply, without ire or malice.

Where a thick bush had hunting shades that bark  
 At haymakers,—there in the dreamy park  
 Papa sat sleeping where a shadow-hound  
 Hunted a hare-quick dream, and ever drowned

In that set piece of firework whiskers, more  
 And more each loud and partridge-whirring snore  
 Blew the peaceful lake's park quite away  
 With domes and temples, through the shining day,

Across the yellow nankin path, where cowers  
 \* The whining dew in marrows' dogskin flowers.  
 For like the dark earth, still Papa did keep  
 A slow and weary, most terrestrial sleep.

But Cupid too was dreaming, could not wake.  
 For this was but an echo that the lake  
 Still held ; for deep within his woodland cottage  
 Mars waits for little Psyche with his pottage,—

That scullion Cinderella who now lives  
 To take the honey from the straw-thatched hives  
 \* Built by her bee-winged dreams, and mend the dress  
 Of that old housekeeper, sour Usefulness.

By haycocks like the castles of gold straw  
 For country satyrs, babyish leaves saw  
 The little girl bear velvet cream, and shining  
 Buns from Venus' stillroom, where lies whining

The dew in flowers of pumpkin and of marrow,  
 Upon the little yellow path so narrow. . . .  
 Until she reached the deep and bear-furred woods  
 Where cross owls mocked her from their leafy hoods.



There underneath the thin and swanskin leaves  
 Where pearled tears fall as a wood-god grieves,  
 Hides, still, a strawberry or violet  
 Budding small as a sweet triolet.

But Cinderella found the servants out,  
 And Marshal Mars loud-roaring with the gout  
 And aiming his old rusted blunderbuss  
 At nothing firing ; with that martial fuss

Like Jove's the blunderbuss's repercussions  
 Fired but pears and apples furred as Russians,—  
 Hit but the candles' shadows,—children dressed  
 In jangling bright clothes,—so they join the blessed.

Mars cried : “ The pirate ships have brought me  
 home

And this damned gout will never let me roam ;  
 Like Windsor Castle towered the thick-walled waves  
 (Enclosing gardens)—country inns seemed caves

Where Mr. Pitt, attired as Charley Wagg\*  
 Began to dance and roar, began to brag  
 Of herring-silver harp-wires, waves that seem  
 Like sunburnt haycocks in a summer dream,

\* “ *Where Mr. Pitt, attired as Charley Wagg. . . .*” This is a reference to a famous actor of the 1840's-1860's in a favourite part. A picture of Mr. Pitt as Charley Wagg can be obtained for the sum of 2d. from Mr. Pollock's shop in Hoxton High Street. . . . There we see him in a bright blue coat, and a top-hat, a resplendent creature with bushy brown whiskers, firing a pistol through the blue distance.

Or satyrs' castles of gold straw entwined  
 With blackest ivy buds and leaves, and lined  
 With lambs' wool, and amid those cocks of hay  
 The sirens play their harp-strings through the day,

And mariners dance jigs, mazarinettes,  
 And hornpipes, with the quickest coucoulettes,  
 The tarantella and the rigodoo,  
 The pas de Calais, blues, and the fazoon,

The schottische, prairie hunch, and the sheep-trot,  
 Among those haycocks, caring not a jot,  
 While the harps' herring-silver jangling sound  
 Makes them forget that they are dead and drowned,

And, on lone crags, nymphs bright as any queen,  
 In crinolines of tarlatine marine,  
 Walk where a few gauze tartan thin leaves grow  
 Among the ermine leaves of the cold snow.

All this is now beyond my furthest reach.  
 I'll poke the fire's tall fort and make a breach,"  
 Mars said : the blunderbuss's repercussions  
 Fired out pears and apples furred as Russians.

" But what has the fire given me  
 From its castellated town  
 With all that crackling martial fuss ?  
 A shadow like a pony, brown  
 And shaggy, grumbling like a bear,  
 For me to ride to Anywhere,—  
 Quebec or Carolina, Greece,  
 Windsor Castle, Cannes, or Nice.

But when the candles' gin to wink,  
 That are jangling tinsel pink  
 As the rosebuds, quickly dare  
 Fresh shadows come like children dressed  
 In jangling bright clothes, Sunday best.  
 What's the use of that to me ? " . . . .

And saying that, the Marshal banged his door  
 With a war's rumours, rumbling o'er the floor.  
 The angry sound then reached the maid, now fain  
 To seek Queen Venus' palace once again

Beside the swanskin pool where roses, pansies,  
 And strawberries and other pretty fancies,  
 With cherries and ripe plums, sing madrigals  
 In the green summer to the waterfalls.

Then through the distance, royal-blue as Punch's  
 Coachman's coat, she stared ; there float, for bunches  
 Of marigolds and zinnias, double daisies,  
 The country inns where traveller Time lazies,

And drinking there, the bright and foxy beer,  
 The gods like peasants with a drunken cheer  
 Danced the polka, and the polonaise,  
 Where like the haycocks seemed the sun's gold rays.

The little bee-winged motes of afternoon  
 Make God in their own image, fainting soon  
 In darkness ; and the bee within her hive  
 Thinks that in golden cells her god must live.

The dog creates a god that still can scent  
A quarry ; and the peaceful cattle lent  
To God their browsing image ; so the peasants'  
Gods must reap the corn and shoot the pheasants.

These are the songs that Cinderella hears  
Walking through leaves like chestnut horses' ears.  
Mars' black and bristling dog like Cerberus  
Still followed her and frisked and made a fuss.

*Neptune—Polka*

“ ‘ TRA la la la—  
                    See me dance the polka,’  
Said Mr. Wagg like a bear,  
‘ With my top hat  
And my whiskers that—  
(Tra la la la) trap the Fair.

Where the waves seem chiming haycocks  
I dance the polka ; there  
Stand Venus' children in their gay frocks,—  
Maroon and marine,—and stare

To see me fire my pistol  
Through the distance blue as my coat ;  
Like Wellington, Byron, the Marquis of Bristol,  
Buzbied great trees float.

While the wheezing hurdy-gurdy  
Of the marine wind blows me  
To the tune of Annie Rooney, sturdy,  
Over the sheafs of sea ;

And bright as a seedsman's packet  
 With zinnias, candytufts chill,  
 Is Mrs. Marigold's jacket  
 As she gapes at the inn door still,

Where at dawn in the box of the sailor,  
 Blue as the decks of the sea,  
 Nelson awoke, crowed like the cocks,  
 Then back to dust sank he.

And Robinson Crusoe  
 Rues so  
 The bright and foxy beer,—  
 But he finds fresh isles in a negress' smiles,—  
 The poxy doxy dear,

As they watch me dance the polka,'  
 Said Mr. Wagg like a bear,  
 'In my top hat and my whiskers that,—  
 Tra la la la, trap the Fair.

Tra la la la la—  
 Tra la la la la—  
 Tra la la la la la la  
                             La  
                             La  
                             La ! ' ”

*Pluto—Mazurka*

“GOD Pluto is a kindly man ; the children ran :  
 ‘Come help us with the games our dames ban.’

He drinks his beer and builds his forge, as red as  
George

The Fourth his face is that the flames tan.

Like baskets of ripe fruit the bird-songs' oaten flutes

All honeyed yellow sound in air, where

Among the hairy leaves fall trills of dew and sheaves

Are tasting of fresh green anew. Flare

His flames as tall

As Windsor Castle, all

Balmoral was not higher ;

Like feathered masks and peas in pots and castled trees

Walled gardens of the sea, the flames seemed all of these.

As red and green as

Petticoats of queans

Among the flowering

Beans they

Bloom. . . . ' Come rest and be !

I care for nobody, not I, the world can be,—and

no one cares for me ! '

In the lane, Hattie

Meddlesome Mattie,

Suddenly quarrel.

Flames like Balmoral

From feathered doxies

Blow up like boxes,

Cram full of matches,—

Each yells and scratches.

Flames green and yellow spirt from lips and eyes  
and skirt,

The leaves like chestnut horses' ears rear.

Ladies, though my forge has made me red as George

The Fourth, such flames we know not here, dear ! ”

*Centaur and Centauresses—Jodelling Song\**

“ WE bear velvet cream,  
 Green and babyish  
 Small leaves seem ; each stream  
 Horses’ tails that swish,

And the chimes remind  
 Us of sweet birds singing,  
 Like the jangling bells  
 On rose trees ringing.

Man must say farewell  
 To parents now,  
 And to William Tell,  
 And Mrs. Cow.

Man must say farewells  
 To storks and Bettes,  
 And to roses’ bells,  
 And statuettes.

\* “*Jodelling Song.*” This is founded on Gertrude Stein’s “*Accents in Alsace*” (The Watch on the Rhine) contained in her book, “*Geography and Plays*”:

“Sweeter than water or cream or ice. Sweeter than bells of roses. Sweeter than winter or summer or spring. Sweeter than pretty posies. Sweeter than anything is my queen and loving is her nature.

“Loving and good and delighted and best is her little King and Sire whose devotion is entire, who has but one desire to express the love which is hers to inspire.

“In the photograph the Rhine hardly showed.

“In what way do chimes remind you of singing? In what way do birds sing? In what way are forests black or white?

“We saw them blue.

“With forget-me-nots.

“In the midst of our happiness we were very pleased.”

Forests white and black  
 In spring are blue  
 With forget-me-nots,  
 And to lovers true

Still the sweet bird begs  
 And tries to cozen  
 Them : ' Buy angels' eggs  
 Sold by the dozen.'

Gone are clouds like inns  
 On the gardens' brinks,  
 And the mountain djinns,—  
 Ganymede sells drinks ;

While the days seem grey,  
 And his heart of ice,  
 Grey as cha nois, or  
 The edelweiss,

And the mountain streams  
 Like cowbells sound—  
 Tirra lirra, drowned  
 In the waiter's dreams

Who has gone beyond  
 The forest waves,  
 While his true and fond  
 Ones seek their graves."

### *Ondines*

" HERE we go gathering nuts and may  
 Though the blond fleeced water flows away



Like youth,—help Venus' step-daughter  
 Beneath the sheep-fleeced trees with water.  
 Through the rose-leaves, green as rocks,  
 We found the wooden pump's thin box  
 And in that crystal cold  
 Limpidity sighing,  
 Like the rose's sorrowful dark heart  
 Darkness is lying.  
 The wooden pump is like a box,  
 And somebody is lying there,  
 A princess with her long black hair,—  
 Someone is sighing.  
 Through rose-buds, bright pink as a candle,  
 We brushed to touch the pump handle,  
 Through leaves as green as rocks ;  
 And from the pump's thin wooden spout  
 The jangling water-drops came out,  
 Through tinsel-pink, thin petals frilled  
 Of marsh mallows limp and chilled,  
 And grew not old—  
 Flowering apart.  
 Oh, someone is crying.”

### *Proserpine*

“HELL'S flames seem flowering rows of beans,  
 As red as petticoats of queans ;  
 They prick and scratch like bees and bears  
 And poverty and prickly pears.

Old women whine, old women stoop  
 From hovels low as a hen-coop ;

The devil in his fouled night-shirt  
Finds nothing there but plumes and dirt.

Hark not the sweet bird that begs,—  
Buy not ever angels' eggs,  
Nor let one in a ragged gown  
Buy, destroy, your heart's walled town.

There is a witch who can destroy  
Paris, and the towers of Troy ;  
But she can live : black cruelty  
May only seize on Poverty.

A widow lived in poverty  
In that glittering wood you see ;  
Black and ghastly was her face,  
Bearded like a goat . . . disgrace

She brought, slew Anne as white as snow,  
Or flowers that on dark branches grow.—  
One winter day, Anne tried to tame  
The green and yellow coxcomb flame :

'If you, sweet bird, will sing and grow,  
I'll dig for you in the cold snow,  
And find for you a ruby berry  
Sweet and sparkling as a cherry.'

The feathered fire was cross instead  
And sulky,—lazy slug-a-bed ;  
Still it was dark, and stars outside  
Shook their bright fleeces through the wide

Deep window . . . she must sweep the floor,  
 Then seek the forest well for more  
 Clear water, though the winds will prowl  
 Through those dark trees, will pounce and howl.

Then through the door the old witch crept.  
 'My pretty one, I thought you slept.'  
 Her dress was rustling like bunched leaves.  
 'A hole is in my bucket,' grieves

The witch. . . . They walked across the snow  
 Where the dark winds ever go,  
 Snuffling beast-like, try to wreak  
 Their rage, or peck Anne's snow-clear cheek.

They reached the forest well at morn,  
 As soft as young blades of the corn  
 Was the clear well-water ;  
 The witch said, 'Draw me some, my daughter.'

From the water's deepest roots  
 She drew ripples soft as fruits,  
 Cold as snow ; and like a bird  
 The old crone drank ; the maid then heard

The soft snows ruffle up each feather,  
 Very angry, shrill together ;  
 With cold bird-tongues across the plain  
 They hunted the old witch again.

When they reached the witch's door  
 Something rustled on the floor :  
 A black man hotter than a coal  
 Crept in through a glittering hole

Near the window . . . all the shade  
 Grew furred and black, a purring made.  
 And little Anne as white as snow  
 Screamed like a bird and tried to go.

The witch grows angry, pinches, scratches,  
 Then blows up like a box of matches,  
 With green and yellow flames that spirt  
 From lips and eyes and hands and skirt,—

Then grows calmer once again ;  
 ‘ Ere across the snowy plain  
 You must go, my dear, I’ll give  
 This to please you while you live.’

She brought two apples harsh and cold. . . .  
 They were glittering like the air,  
 They were like the crowns of gold  
 Cannibal black kings do wear ;

The coldest snows were far less dire,—  
 For ever since that gift of wicked  
 Doll, Anne melts within a thicket  
 Of thorns that glitter like a fire ;

And snow-white Anne melts quite away. . . .  
 The other women find a thorn  
 In their fingers. . . . Doll did slay  
 With pins in wax, a babe new-born ;

Before the Justice then they took  
 The witch. ‘ Go, in her chimney nook,  
 William Thick and William Read  
 You must watch all night and heed.’

In her crannied honied wall  
 Many a strange flower bright and tall  
 Grew ; the shades sang like a wren,  
 Or speckled thrushes, dancing then. . . .

At three o'clock in the clear morning  
 Suddenly without a warning  
 Very strangely shook her hair ;  
 It shone as bright as fire, and there

A glittering bright fly like a miller  
 Then came flying from her poll,  
 And it shone as bright as silver ;  
 Like a rag-doll there lay Doll

Moaning ; then she did confess  
 As they tweaked her, tore her dress,—  
 ' My Familiar sucks my poll  
 Like a fly, and gives poor Doll

Devil's Silver.' That is why  
 Doll must hang until she die. . . .  
 In green baize forests in the park  
 Hunts Dian ; doe-smooth hounds that bark

Run like waterfalls, and find  
 Never rabbit, doe, or hind.  
 Great red and white, bird-glossy flowers  
 Sing like birds in spring's quick showers

Among dark glittering leaves, have names  
 Of Venus' damsels and dead shames,—  
 Alaciel or Arrhinoe. . . .  
 There Dian's buskined damsel Chloe

Finds that ventriloquist's old doll  
 From rhododendron boughs doth loll,  
 Where roses seem to foresters  
 The heavenly chapel's choristers."

. . . . .

Clear then as Ariel, or the light that grew  
 In eastern quarries ripening precious dew\*  
 A sylph came, and the trees' vast waterfalls  
 Echoed this water-dripping song like flashing bright  
     bird-calls,  
 To country nymphs who vanished like the motes  
 That Phœbus spreads among the glittering leaves,  
 Bound like the richest sheaves,  
 And only live now in the dark voice of the country  
     nightingale  
 That still for rustic nymphs among the bunchèd  
     leaves doth wail.

*Sylph's Song—Waltz*

"DAISY and Lily,  
 Lazy and silly,  
 Walk by the shore of the wan grassy sea,—  
 Talking once more 'neath a swan-bosomed tree.  
 Rose castles,  
 Tourelles,  
 Those bustles  
 Where swells  
 Each foam-bell of ermine,  
 They roam and determine

\* "Annus Mirabilis." Dryden.

What fashions have been and what fashions will  
be,—

What tartan leaves born,

What crinolines worn.

By Queen Thetis,

Pelisses

Of tarlatine blue,

Like the thin plaided leaves that the castle crags grew,

Or velours d'Afrande :

On the water-gods' land

Her hair seemed gold trees on the honey-cell sand

When the thickest gold spangles, on deep water seen,

Were like twanging guitar and like cold mandoline,

And the nymphs of great caves,

With hair like gold waves,

Of Venus, wore tarlatine.

Louise and Charlottine

(Boreas' daughters)

And the nymphs of deep waters,

The nymph Taglioni, Grisi the ondine,

Wear plaided Victoria and thin Clementine

Like the crinolined waterfalls ;

Wood-nymphs wear bonnets, shawls,

Elegant parasols

Floating are seen.

The Amazons wear balzarine of jonquille

Beside the blond lace of a deep-falling rill ;

Through glades like a nun

They run from and shun

The enormous and gold-rayed rustling sun ;

And the nymphs of the fountains

Descend from the mountains

Like elegant willows  
 On their deep barouche pillows,  
 In cashmere Alvandar, barège Isabelle,  
 Like bells of bright water from clearest wood-  
     well.

Our élégantes favouring bonnets of blond,  
 The stars in their apiaries,  
 Sylphs in their aviaries,  
 Seeing them, spangle these, and the sylphs fond  
 From their aviaries fanned  
 With each long fluid hand  
 The manteaux espagnoles,  
 Mimic the waterfalls  
 Over the long and the light summer land.

. . . . .

So Daisy and Lily,  
 Lazy and silly,  
 Walk by the shore of the wan grassy sea,  
 Talking once more 'neath a swan-bosomed tree.  
 Rose castles,  
 Tourelles,  
 Those bustles !  
 Mourelles  
 Of the shade in their train follow.  
 Ladies, how vain,—hollow,—  
 Gone is the sweet swallow,—  
 Gone, Philomel ! ”

. . . . .

Behind the bee-hives, ruched cascades came down,  
 And splashed the red and white striped poil de chèvre  
     short gown



Of little Psyche, her skirts striped with seven  
Rows of mohair angels made in Heaven.

Like baskets of ripe fruit that hang in air,  
Honeyed and yellow, seem the bird-songs where  
Among the hairy leaves fall trills of dew,  
All tasting of the freshest green anew.

. . . . .

The honey-wingèd little breeze sipped near ;  
The lovely neighbours of the Silence hear  
That shepherd, the young rainbow, lead his flocks  
With gentle footsteps o'er the crags and rocks.

Through heavy leaves his footsteps' gilded beam  
Shone . . . apricots so ripe their kernels seem  
Gemmed amethysts,—the rose abricotine,  
And one who wears a blond lace pelerine,

The rose like the small angel Hortense, chant  
Of the white rose that first Communicant,  
So gauzy white and trembling that we see  
Her candid pure as Agnes, Virginie,

Grew round the inn. . . . There on the balustrade  
Are the nymphs' urns ; the seeds of water laid  
Deep in that earth blossomed to rich carnations,  
Ranunculus, and leaves bunched as Alsatians'

Petticoats . . . and there a table rose  
Like Alps, or Jupiter's great cage of snows ;  
A god and goddess, vast as Apennines,  
Drink pastel-placid water, tinkling wines

That seem the gallantry of mandolines  
 Among the crackling greenery's vast sheens. . . .  
 "No rose but Jupiter's gold bees can tell  
 What lovely thieves deflowered each honey-cell."

And so each little honey-wingèd breeze  
 In the green dark seems Jupiter's gold bees.  
 "Oh more than heavenly rose, oh lovely one,  
 We seek thy gold for Death, that Solomon,

And Time, the mould from which our beauty grows,  
 In which it dies. Time shapes the poem's close  
 And measures our small distance to the sun,  
 And moments like his bee-winged motes that run.

Let us consider Beauty's earthly dress  
 From life's first trance ; the mineral consciousness  
 Is blankness inside an invisible  
 And rigid box, defined, divisible,

And separate from its sheath . . . breathe not too  
 deep,  
 If you would know the mineral's trancèd sleep.  
 So measure breath that you too are apart  
 And are not conscious of the living heart.

But the plant seeks the light that is its lover,—  
 Knows never separation between cover  
 And sentience . . . the sun's heat and the dew's chill  
 It knows in sleep with an undreaming thrill.

And colour breathes that is reflected light,  
 The ray and perfume of the sun is white ;

But when this intermingles, as in love,  
With earthbound things, the dream begins to move.

Colour that sleeps as in a dreamless cloud  
Deep in the mineral's trance within its shroud,—  
This cloud then to a fluid changes, grows,  
Deep in the stem and leaves of the dark rose.

The colour that was but a tranced cloud  
Deep in the mineral, grew to music loud  
As spring within the rose ; at last it ran  
Like blood within the heart of beast and man,—

The golden beasts that leap and dance like fire,  
This bestial consciousness that is desire  
Is the hot muscles' vast fluidity,  
Muscular life, not physicality.

In the hot blood of every golden beast  
We find this fiery cloud,—with it the least  
Of gilded honey-drops that heavenly lies  
Like amber in the rose's heart, then dies.

Ah, could the ruby move from trance to sleep  
It might become a rose whose perfume deep  
Grows in eternity ; that radiance is  
Still unawakened by the spring light's kiss !

The rose might seek the untamed rainbow through  
The humble Eden of a drop of dew ;  
Until at last in heavenly friendship grows  
The ruby and the rainbow and the rose.

This was the song she heard,—life's serenade  
There in the wineshop in the gilded glade;  
Men hearkened, but this old world's black renown  
Shouted in all the gutters of the town.

## THE MADNESS OF SAUL

### *Semichorus I of Ethiopian Women*

O VINEYARDS of the world, cry to the Dawn—  
 Great streams of light that water all the world  
 And flow like music in our veins, bring life  
 To those unborn. Fresh founts and waterways  
 Of the young light, flow down and lie like peace  
 Upon the upturned faces of the blind.  
 For all the winds and wings of the wide dark  
 Fan us to flame, and, Mother of the world,  
 I stand with hands upraised to the young Day.

### *Semichorus II*

The Sun's wide wings have fanned our bodies black :  
 With eyelids like the flashing of a sword,  
 And lips like fire of flowers, or frankincense,  
 We builded Day with our immortal kiss.  
 We bring thee flowers, some pale with unshed tears,  
 All lustrous with the echoes of the dawn,  
 And perfumed with the light, or flame of flowers  
 As yellow as the hair of Iacchus—  
 They grew in palace portals of the Sun.  
 And these shall touch the eyelids of the moon  
 With slumber, fill with music the chill air.

### *Semichorus I*

O we are black because the heat hath kissed  
 Our lips, those heavy grapes, and laid a kiss

- ' On eyelids like the chambers of the South  
Wherefrom the sweet light drips for frankincense.
- ' And we have brought you flowers,—mounds of silver,  
And full of chilly bubbles for the bees.

*Semichorus II*

We sat beside the rivers and we wept,  
For we are black beneath the Sun's hot kiss.  
The Sun hath left his tent and kissed our breasts  
Till they were sweeter than the budding grapes,  
The savour of our eyelids seemed the morn.  
And then She came, the music of the air,  
And all the old worlds died away like dew.

*Semichorus I*

We are the perfumed portals of the dawn,  
We are the flowering vineyards of the Sun  
That break in music, glorify the Lord.  
Our heartstrings like the music of the suns  
Echo across the splendour of the earth,  
And Time, a fiery dew, upon our hair  
Is shed and fades ; with lips and veins I cry—  
Light fills me, light invades me, light is life.

*(Enter Saul)*

*Semichorus II*

I heard a cry that rustled through the day :  
Broad rivers fanned by wings of many winds  
Have such a sound. But then it died again.  
And all night long I heard the tread of Doom.

*Saul*

Why have you slain the Sun? He was my brother,  
He kills the one he loves. So brothers do.

*Semichorus I*

The Sun hath golden feet to crush our grapes :  
But all the grapes of joy grew ripe too soon.

*Saul*

Flesh is but dew, it falls like summer rains.  
She came, a fiery sun, to drain my life,  
And she hath kissed me, melted up my veins.

*(Enter Atarah, Mother of Saul)*

*Atarah*

Behold me, broken on the wheel of light ;  
My footsteps are the tread of blinded Doom.

*Chorus*

Thy body reels as though some unheard wind,  
Broken from Hell, blew on thee. What is this ?

*Atarah*

Slain, slain, and by the hand of his own brother.

*Chorus*

Thy lips are red, but not with blood of fruits.

*Atarah*

I kissed my son. My lips shall wither now.

*Chorus*

And thou art clothed with trembling like the grass.

*Atarah*

My name is Madness, I whose face was light,  
 Thus I exhale from all the chasms of life,  
 Till heaven is broken into dust and dies.

*Chorus*

Queen, old age clear and terrible as noon,  
 Thy face hath gathered darkness from the heavens.

*Atarah*

Pull down the heavens, seal mine eyes with night.  
 O emptiness sifts endlessly, they rock, come down.  
 I had two eyes, and she has blinded them—  
 Two breasts to feed the world : she hacked them off.  
 These were my sons, twin-born, my roots of life :  
 And she has torn my roots, I drift through space.

*Saul*

Ay, there is nothing left but silence now.  
 A cry went up, the weft of the world was riven,  
 Then silence filled my veins instead of blood.  
 She came, a snake, and stabbed my veins with love.  
 Her fangs grew in my blood. I killed my brother.

*Atarah*

You should have stabbed my womb, Saul, my son  
 Saul.

*Saul*

O that my tired body could find sleep  
 Once more within your dark womb, O my mother.



*Atarah*

The earth is drunken with my lamentation,  
 And night invades my veins and flows within  
 My face grown blind and featureless as heaven.  
 I would Time were a dew that fades away,  
 And life, a veil the hate of God has riven,  
 And this sad house of clay wherein I dwell  
 Were broken like the earth,—were spilt as rain.  
 My tongue is changed to dust. I fain would weep  
 Only mine eyelids withered when he died.

*Chorus*

Nay thou art veiled with tears like some sad river.

*Atarah*

Bountiful Death, with lips and veins I cry  
 Come to my breast that I may give you suck.  
 I had two sons, they clung upon my breast—  
 But oh, they never need my breast-milk now—  
 My breasts will wither for the want of them.

*Amasa*

Nay sit a little, warming in the sun ;  
 We have such withered hands that soon grow cold.  
 I bore men too, and then the old grey men,  
 The old grey hungry men said one word “ war ”—  
 And wrung my children’s bodies dry of blood  
 And hid them in a hole lest I should kiss them.  
 We are so old we should be gone,—too old  
 To die, too weak to creep into the grave,  
 Two poor old women : for these strong young men  
 Have taken all the grave-room, and we’re left !

*Atarah*

The lips that kissed my sons are changed to dust,  
 But I've one prayer still left, one prayer, O God !  
 Seal up her eyes that she may never weep ;  
 Seal up her tongue upon the Judgement Day ;  
 Seal up the earth that she may never creep  
 To hide her face from thee within the grave :  
 Seal up her breast that she may never feed  
 Those children of her womb, the worms of death !

*Saul*

Crush down the beat of Time, O mighty God—  
 The pulse of youth, the veins of love and hate,  
 That I may hear the crying of her soul.  
 With those lips, red as hell, she burned the world.  
 The light is dead, for with her long black hair  
 That twists and writhes like hell's long hissing river  
 She quenched the light. O she is very pale :—  
 White with the dust of æons is her face—  
 Things ground to powder by the mills of lust.  
 And I will sift her dust like whitened ash  
 From craters of my hate. She looked at me . . .  
 My bones were water, and the world lay dead.

*Atarah*

My body is broken as the form of night.  
 I gave these light, and they have blinded me.

*Chorus*

Our heartstrings were the music of the suns  
 When their strong youth comes freshened from deep  
     seas ;  
 We were the perfum'd portals of the dawn—

The singing gardens of the Pleiades.  
 The vineyards of the world, our heavy locks,  
 When all the fruits of summer shout for joy ;  
 Our eyelids were the chambers of the south,  
 The gold light drips therefrom like frankincense.  
 Then madness blew on us, a mighty wind :  
 The palaces of light are overthrown  
 And broken lie the rainbows, their great harps,  
 With burning music muted by the dust.  
 Our thoughts, strong horses that unfettered ran  
 Within the golden pastures of the Day ;  
 Then madness reined them ; she has drunk their  
     strength

As summer drains the strongest rivers' pride.  
 We built new worlds with our immortal kiss,  
 Then madness swept like Time across our worlds.  
 And when we spoke, all space broke into flower  
 Till madness came like winter withering ;  
 And Time was but the beat of heart to heart,  
 Till madness sealed the heart-beat of the world.  
 Bull-throated now the fires of madness blast :  
 The world's vast walls reel blindly, then collapse.

### *Semichorus*

Pull down the heavens like a sackcloth pall  
 To spread upon our faces sealed with night ;  
 Crush out the dawn-spring from the ruined heaven,  
 The fabric of the air is torn apart :  
 The world is dead. There is no world at all.  
 The light is dead. There shall be no more light.  
 Pull down the heavens like a sackcloth pall.  
 Crush down the beat of Time. It was my heart.

## TROY PARK

### I.—THE WARMTH OF SPRING

(FROM "THE CHILD WHO SAW MIDAS")

#### I

UNDER the five-pointed, the great gold sun,  
That gardener spring has brought into perfection  
The goat-foot satyr waves were sighing strangely  
Of unseen beauty ; at the hot sand's edge  
Anchored by waters like the sound of flutes  
Our nurses sat ; it seemed, I thought, they listened.  
And they were black with shade, and so we named  
Them Asia, Africa, and still they seem  
Each like a continent with flowers and fruits  
Unknown to us ; in the hot noon they glistened  
With wild dew crying of some long-still dream.

In snow-soft places melting into flowers  
Young girls are sitting under zither-tinkling  
Green leaves, and they too are black with shade.  
But oh, the new worlds hidden in each heart !  
And the white seraph flower-bells bright with dew,  
So gauzy they seem floating on the air,  
Are speaking of those worlds the young girls knew.  
Their hair is glittering like jewels, the grass is soft  
As little birds and singing of the forests.

For in the forests great flowers shine like music,  
Or spread to silence in the tropic heat,

And every flower tells a thousand legends  
 Of unseen beauty that will never die ;  
 And the birds shining in the dark of forests  
 Forget the grief of Philomela, knowing  
 Only her youth, forgetting all the darkness.

Our nurses called to us, their faces lovely  
 As that dove-soft hour we call good night ;  
 Africa and Asia spoke, " Oh never  
 Must you wander far into the forests,  
 Lest you should learn life from the dwarfish dust,  
 Or, like Cassandra, your deep lips should learn  
 The speech of birds and serpents in that glade  
 Where we have spoken with the ultimate Darkness,—  
 Or know the secrets that in earth are laid—  
 The buried jewels whose hearts may never soften  
 Into sweet flowers to bloom in the spring forests.  
 For there is one dark forest—one whose name  
 You know not, haunted by a darker shade."  
 Yet as they spoke, the old worlds died like dew—  
 Life was so beautiful that shadow meant  
 Not death, but only peace, a lovely lulling.

## II

" TELL us the story that the flowers are sighing  
 Of long ago, ere this old world lay dying."

" In the forest of sweet birds the spring begins  
 And all the trees have leaves like drops of water,  
 Or small soft birds that sing of lost delight.  
 There is a song that one strange bird is singing

To the brown child that seemed an idol buried  
 Deep beneath the sands, long ages since,  
 Whose heart has changed into a diamond  
 Down below the old and wrinkled darkness  
 Of Mexican forests, buried like an idol—  
 Awakening now, and changing to a flower,  
 For this is spring and the forest of sweet birds.”

“ What is the song that one strange bird is singing  
 Where in the spring the sweet and yellow weed  
 Has perfume like a light within the mind ? ”

And shall we never find those diamonds bright  
 That were the fawn-queen of Palmyra's eyes ?  
 Ah, dark hot jewels lie hidden from the sight  
 Under dark palm trees where the river sighs  
 Beyond the tomb of young eternities.  
 And in the desert, lonely flowers weep—  
 The clouds have long wild hair that tangles sleep.”

## 2.—COLONEL FANTOCK

TO OSBERT AND SACHEVERELL

THUS spoke the lady underneath the trees :  
 I was a member of a family  
 Whose legend was of hunting—(all the rare  
 And unattainable brightness of the air)—  
 A race whose fabled skill in falconry  
 Was used on the small song-birds and a winged  
 And blinded Destiny. . . . I think that only  
 Winged ones know the highest eyrie is so lonely.

There in a land, austere and elegant,  
 The castle seemed an arabesque in music ;  
 We moved in an hallucination born  
 Of silence, which like music gave us lotus  
 To eat, perfuming lips and our long eyelids  
 As we trailed over the sad summer grass,  
 Or sat beneath a smooth and mournful tree.

And Time passed, suavely, imperceptibly.

But Dagobert and Peregrine and I  
 Were children then ; we walked like shy gazelles  
 Among the music of the thin flower-bells.  
 And life still held some promise,—never ask  
 Of what,—but life seemed less a stranger, then,  
 Than ever after in this cold existence.  
 I always was a little outside life,—  
 And so the things we touch could comfort me ;  
 I loved the shy dreams we could hear and see—  
 For I was like one dead, like a small ghost,  
 A little cold air wandering and lost.

All day within the straw-roofed arabesque  
 Of the towered castle and the sleepy gardens wandered  
 We ; those delicate paladins the waves  
 Told us fantastic legends that we pondered.

And the soft leaves were breasted like a dove,  
 Crooning old mournful tales of untrue love.

When night came, sounding like the growth of trees,  
 My great-grandmother bent to say good night,

And the enchanted moonlight seemed transformed  
 Into the silvery tinkling of an old  
 And gentle music-box that played a tune  
 Of Circean enchantments and far seas ;  
 Her voice was lulling like the splash of these.  
 When she had given me her good-night kiss,  
 There, in her lengthened shadow, I saw this  
 Old military ghost with mayfly whiskers,—  
 Poor harmless creature, blown by the cold wind,  
 Boasting of unseen unreal victories  
 To a harsh unbelieving world unkind,—  
 For all the battles that this warrior fought  
 Were with cold poverty and helpless age—  
 His spoils were shelters from the winter's rage.  
 And so for ever through his braggart voice,  
 Through all that martial trumpet's sound, his soul  
 Wept with a little sound so pitiful,  
 Knowing that he is outside life for ever  
 With no one that will warm or comfort him. . . .  
 He is not even dead, but Death's buffoon  
 On a bare stage, a shrunken pantaloon.  
 His military banner never fell,  
 Nor his account of victories, the stories  
 Of old apocryphal misfortunes, glories  
 Which comforted his heart in later life  
 When he was the Napoleon of the schoolroom  
 And all the victories he gained were over  
 Little boys who would not learn to spell.

All day within the sweet and ancient gardens  
 He had my childish self for audience—  
 Whose body flat and strange, whose pale straight hair



Made me appear as though I had been drowned—  
 (We all have the remote air of a legend)—  
 And Dagobert my brother whose large strength,  
 Great body and grave beauty still reflect  
 The Angevin dead kings from whom we spring ;  
 And sweet as the young tender winds that stir  
 In thickets when the earliest flower-bells sing  
 Upon the boughs, was his just character ;  
 And Peregrine the youngest with a naïve  
 Shy grace like a faun's, whose slant eyes seemed  
 The warm green light beneath eternal boughs.  
 His hair was like the fronds of feathers, life  
 In him was changing ever, springing fresh  
 As the dark songs of birds . . . the furry warmth  
 And purring sound of fires was in his voice  
 Which never failed to warm and comfort me.

And there were haunted summers in Troy Park  
 When all the stillness budded into leaves ;  
 We listened, like Ophelia drowned in blond  
 And fluid hair, beneath stag-antlered trees ;  
 Then, in the ancient park the country-pleasant  
 Shadows fell as brown as any pheasant,  
 And Colonel Fantock seemed like one of these.  
 Sometimes for comfort in the castle kitchen  
 He drowsed, where with a sweet and velvet lip  
 The snapdragons within the fire  
 Of their red summer never tire.  
 And Colonel Fantock liked our company ;  
 For us he wandered over each old lie,  
 Changing the flowering hawthorn, full of bees,  
 Into the silver helm of Hercules,

For us defended Troy from the top stair  
 Outside the nursery, when the calm full moon  
 Was like the sound within the growth of trees.

But then came one cruel day in deepest June,  
 When pink flowers seemed a sweet Mozartian tune,  
 And Colonel Fantock pondered o'er a book.  
 A gay voice like a honeysuckle nook,—  
 So sweet,—said, "It is Colonel Fantock's age  
 Which makes him babble." . . . Blown by winter's  
     rage

The poor old man then knew his creeping fate,  
 The darkening shadow that would take his sight  
 And hearing ; and he thought of his saved pence  
 Which scarce would rent a grave . . . that youthful  
     voice

Was a dark bell which ever clanged "Too late"—  
 A creeping shadow that would steal from him  
 Even the little boys who would not spell,—  
 His only prisoners. . . . On that June day  
 Cold Death had taken his first citadel.

### 3.—MADEMOISELLE RICHARDE

FOR STELLA BOWEN

BESIDE the haunted lake where nereids seem  
 Court ladies in a dark deserted dream,  
 Who were perfected in their glacial chill  
 By Mademoiselle Richarde, I wandered still ;  
 Among the enchanted waters that seem green  
 Deep mirrors, their cold beauty's shade is seen. . . .  
 A swan-like waterfall now dies  
 Singing its cold elegies.

An air sighs without memory and lost . . .  
 The leaves are cold and seeking like a ghost.

. . . . .

There are sad ghosts whose living was not life  
 But a small complaining, dying without strife,  
 A little reading by sad candlelight  
 Of some unowned, uncared-for book, a slight  
 Rustling then, a settling down to sleep.  
 And cold unutterable Darkness deep  
 Has soothed them and has smoothed their eyelids fast,  
 And they have their own resting-place at last  
 Who longed for this from hopeless distances . . .  
 Poor unloved creatures whose existences  
 Were spent upon the surface of another's  
 Life ; the Darkness seems like their own mother's  
 Touch ; they are so used to fireless life, so old  
 That they would scarcely know the grave is cold ;  
 But life had so forgotten this poor dead  
 That death had left them still unburied.  
 He had no room for them in all his grace  
 Though they would only need a little place ;  
 Age shrinks our hearts and makes our bodies wane  
 Until we seem a little child again—  
 But not the children that we used to be,  
 Blind to the heaven childish eyes can see.

. . . . .

Yet there are those who do not feel the cold ;  
 And Mademoiselle Richarde was thus,—both old  
 And sharp, content to be the cold wind's butt ;  
 A tiny spider in a gilded nut,

She lived and rattled in the emptiness  
 Of other people's splendours ; her rich dress  
 Had muffled her old loneliness of heart.  
 This was her life ; to live another's part,  
 To come and go unheard, a ghost unseen  
 Among the courtly mirrors glacial green,  
 Placed just beyond her reach for fear that she  
 Forget her loneliness, her image see  
 Grown concrete, not a ghost by cold airs blown.  
 So each reflection blooms there but her own ;  
 She sits at other people's tables, raises  
 Her hands at other people's joys and praises  
 Their cold amusements, drawing down the blinds  
 Over her face for other's griefs,—the winds  
 Her sole friends now, grown grey and grim as she,  
 They have forgotten how to hear or see.  
 And her opinions are not her own,  
 But meaningless half words by cold airs blown  
 Through keyholes . . . words that were not meant  
 for her.

“Madame la Duchesse said, ‘The spring winds  
 stir ! ’ ”

(Madame la Duchesse, old and gold japanned,  
 Whirled like a typhoon over the grey land  
 In her wide carriage, while a dead wind grieves  
 Among those seeking ghosts, the small grey leaves.)  
 So now, like Echo, she is soundless fleet  
 Save for the little talk she can repeat,—  
 Small whispers listened for at courtly doors.  
 She swims across the river-dark vast floors  
 To fires that seem like rococo gilt carving,  
 Nor ever knows her shrunken heart is starving,

Till, crumbling into dust, grown blind and dumb  
 With age, at last she hears her sole friend come,  
 Consoling Darkness smooths her eyelids fast  
 And she has her own resting-place at last.

#### 4.—THE PLEASURE GARDENS

“*Les bacchantes des banlieues.*”—ARTHUR RIMBAUD.

DO you remember, Damon, the hot noons  
 And the paths bordered with vast unknown gardens  
 Of apes, grown men? There through the iron gates  
 Of the fantastic gardens grow great flowers,  
 And those small heart-shaped flowers that have the eyes  
 Of little sisters in our long-dead childhood.  
 You are a child again, with your young face  
 Plunged in the calyx of the great dream-flowers  
 Smelling them . . . they die away like music  
 Within your brain, like all the sounds of youth.

Then from the landscape sounds a note of menace  
 From the fantastic darkness of the forests ;  
 There are vast plains beyond our sight, afar,  
 And there amid the green baize thickened leaves  
 Live all the creaking gods of kitchen gardens . . .  
 Outside their realm, in chickeny wet grass  
 The farmer and the gardener as they pass  
 Have faces that seem feathered like the wind,  
 Or Mercury, and Darkness hides behind  
 Their faces like the empty wind's blind mask.

And deep within the broken laurel groves,  
 Are those that seem our own prophetic shadows.

The old Bacchantes of the suburbs, sit  
Where sunlight wraps their unloved bones with  
warmth,

Stare like the dead at something none may see,  
Mumble unspoken words that died long since,  
For want of one to listen, year on year.

“ I sit a little, warming in the sun  
This crumbling dust of mine, and to my heart  
I hold a little blue-eyed fair-haired ghost—  
But oh, he never needs my breast-milk now,—  
My breasts have withered for the want of him  
And I have nothing left for Death to take ! ”

“ How happy are you with your little ghost !  
But I am old and cold and have small greeds,  
My dreams are all the same, of daily needs . . .  
For oh, the poor dreams fade away, my dear.  
Perhaps they have grown tired ; we hardly hear  
Their music now ; or else they were too young  
To bear with us ; for the harsh world is tired,  
We make the world impatient, grown so slow.  
All day we creep through the unending city . . .  
The vulturine wide light that knows no pity  
Devours our aged hearts, defenceless, old.  
Yet though our eyes are dim with age, we know  
The unfriendly faces, and our friendless bones  
Feel their unburiedness, struck with death’s chill.”

So, deep within the broken laurel groves,  
These that seem our own prophetic shadows,  
The old Bacchantes of the suburbs, sit  
Where sunlight wraps their unloved bones with  
warmth,

Stare like the dead at something none may see.

But here in this unknown and flashing summer  
weather

We walk among the bosquets, once more young,  
And lovely now that we may walk together . . .  
Oh, the strange people . . . the child paladins  
From some fantastic delicate pilgrimage,  
The young mammas, with shadows lengthening  
Into great birds that sing among the gardens  
Songs from some far-off land,—the distant music !

#### 5.—THE CAT

HIS kind velvet bonnet  
Warmly lies upon  
My weary lap, and on it  
My tears run.

The black and furry fire  
Sinks low, and like the dire  
Sound of charring coal, the black  
Cat's whirring back.

On the bare bough  
A few blue threadbare leaves,  
A few blue plaided leaves grow  
Like mornings and like eves.

Scotch bonnet, bonny,  
Lying on my gown,  
The fire was once, hey nonny,  
A battlemented town ;

And every morn I build  
 Those steep castles there,  
 And every night they're ruined  
 Like the boughs bare.

And nothing doth remain,  
 Kind bonny, but my pain,  
 And night and morn, like boughs they're bare,  
 With nobody to care.

#### 6.—PANDORA'S BOX

SUAVE as music the long house seemed platformed  
 On the grassy clouds' wide landing stage  
 Where we could disembark with our plumed helms  
 From all the strangest voyages, the most plumeless  
 Flights. There was no Ind we did not know ;  
 And the sharp prows of our beaked ships have  
     scattered pearls like snow.

And always the wide windows were far open  
 And, perching on the sill was many a bird  
 Whose eyes were full of a long-unknown music—  
 Enchantment waking mortals never heard.  
 They whisper secrets to our ears, that fade  
 If they are caged in words. Upon these perilous  
 Landing stages were the softest bosquets,  
 Where in the Olympian heat, the mirage  
 Flowers and blazing fruits that ever glittered  
 Like a song, could fade into deep silence.

But in that great house was a little room  
 Far from the sound of the great gods feasting,



Or the sharp prows that scattered pearls like snow.  
 And on the walls was one small dark engraving—  
 A flat and feathered sea was staged above  
 A desert isle, and underneath, the words  
 “ This is the Sea of Fortune,—this the sea  
 You have not found.” . . . But oh, on one dark day  
 Of summer, darker-plumaged than a harpy,  
 I crept to that small room . . . there was a box  
 (A flat thin sea that seemed a crystal box) . . .  
 And all the mad Cassandra tongues of birds  
 Cried “ Troy is burning,”—there, outside the  
     window.—  
 Yet all that box held was a small thin letter.

# FAÇADE

TO SACHEVERELL

*"This modern world is but a thin match-board flooring spread over a shallow bell. For Dante's hell has faded, is dead. Hell is no vastness; here are no more devils who laugh or who weep—only the maimed dwarfs of this life, terrible straining mechanisms, crouching in trivial sands, and laughing at the giants' crumbling!"—From an essay by the Author.*

## I.—PÈRE AMELOT

THE stars like quaking-grass grow in each gap  
Of air (ruined castle wall) . . .

Père Amelot in his white nightcap  
Peered through . . . saw nothing at all.

Like statues green from the verdigris  
Of the moon, two shadows join  
His shade, that under that castle wall sees  
The moon like a Roman coin.

Out of his nightcap he drew three pence . . .  
Marie and Angélique pass  
The knife through Père Amelot's back—in the dense  
Bushes fly . . . he nods on the grass.

The man with the lanthorn, a moment after,  
Picks up the moon that fell  
Like an Augustan coin when laughter  
Shook the hen-cackling grass of Hell;

And the Public Writer inscribing his runes  
 Beneath that castle wall, sees  
 Three Roman coins as blackened as prunes—  
 And Père Amelot slain for these !

The stars like quaking-grass grow in each gap  
 Of air—ruined castle wall . . .  
 Père Amelot nods in his white nightcap . . .  
 He knows there is nothing at all !

## 2.—THE BAT

CASTELLATED, tall  
 From battlements fall  
 Shades on heroic  
 Lonely grass,  
 Where the moonlight's echoes die and pass.  
 Near the rustic boorish,  
 Fustian Moorish,  
 Castle wall of the ultimate Shade,  
 With his cloak castellated as that wall, afraid,  
 The mountebank doctor,  
 The old stage quack,  
 Where decoy duck dust  
 Began to clack,  
 Watched Heliogabalusene the Bat  
 In his furred cloak hang head down from the flat  
 Wall, cling to what is convenient,  
 Lenient.  
 “ If you hang upside down with squeaking shrill,  
 You will see dust, lust, and the will to kill,  
 And life is a matter of which way falls  
 Your tufted turreted Shade near these walls.

For muttering guttering shadow will plan  
 If you're ruined wall, or pygmy man,"  
 Said Heliogabalusene, "or a pig,  
 Or the empty Cæsar in tall periwig."  
 And the mountebank doctor,  
 The old stage quack,  
 Spread out a black membraned wing of his cloak  
 And his shuffling footsteps seem to choke,  
 Near the Castle wall of the ultimate Shade  
 Where decoy duck dust  
 Quacks, clacks, afraid.

### 3.—CLOWNS' HOUSES

BENEATH the flat and paper sky  
 The sun, a demon's eye,  
 Glowed through the air, that mask of glass ;  
 All wand'ring sounds that pass

Seemed out of tune, as if the light  
 Were fiddle-strings pulled tight.  
 The market-square with spire and bell  
 Clanged out the hour in Hell.

The busy chatter of the heat  
 Shrilled like a parokeet ;  
 And shuddering at the noonday light  
 The dust lay dead and white

As powder on a mummy's face,  
 Or fawned with simian grace  
 Round booths with many a hard bright toy  
 And wooden brittle joy :

The cap and bells of Time the Clown  
That, jangling, whistled down,  
Young cherubs hidden in the guise  
Of every bird that flies ;

And star-bright masks for youth to wear,  
Lest any dream that fare  
—Bright pilgrim—past our ken, should see  
Hints of Reality.

Upon the sharp-set grass, shrill-green,  
Tall trees like rattles lean,  
And jangle sharp and dizzily ;  
But when night falls they sigh

Till Pierrot moon steals slyly in,  
His face more white than sin,  
Black-masked, and with cool touch lays bare  
Each cherry, plum, and pear.

Then underneath the veiled eyes  
Of houses, darkness lies,—  
Tall houses ; like a hopeless prayer  
They cleave the sly dumb air.

Blind are those houses, paper-thin ;  
Old shadows hid therein,  
With sly and crazy movements creep  
Like marionettes, and weep.

Tall windows show Infinity ;  
And, hard reality,  
The candles weep and pry and dance  
Like lives mocked at by Chance.

The rooms are vast as Sleep within :  
 When once I ventured in,  
 Chill Silence, like a surging sea  
 Slowly enveloped me.

#### 4.—THE WIND'S BASTINADO

THE wind's bastinado  
 Whipt on the calico  
 Skin of the Macaroon  
 And the black Picaroon  
 Beneath the galloon  
 Of the midnight sky.  
 Came the great Soldan  
 In his sedan  
 Floating his fan—  
 Saw what the sly  
 Shadow's cocoon  
 In the barracoon  
 Held. Out they fly.  
 " This melon,  
 Sir Mammon,  
 Comes out of Babylon :  
 Buy for a patacoon—  
 Sir, you must buy ! ”  
 Said Il Magnifico  
 Pulling a fico—  
 With a stoccado  
 And a gambado,  
 Making a wry  
 Face : “ This corraceous  
 Round orchidaceous

Laceous porraceous  
 Fruit is a lie !  
 It is my friend King Pharaoh's head  
 That nodding blew out of the Pyramid. . . ."  
 . . . The tree's small corinths  
 Were hard as jacinths,  
 For it is winter and cold winds sigh . . .  
 No nightingale  
 In her farthingale  
 Of bunchèd leaves let her singing die.

#### 5.—LULLABY FOR JUMBO

JUMBO asleep !  
 Grey leaves thick-furred  
 As his ears, keep  
 Conversations blurred.  
 Thicker than hide  
 Is the trumpeting water ;  
 Don Pasquito's bride  
 And his youngest daughter  
 Watch the leaves  
 Elephantine grey :  
 What is it grieves  
 In the torrid day ?  
 Is it the animal  
 World that snores  
 Harsh and inimical  
 In sleepy pores ?—  
 And why should the spined flowers  
 Red as a soldier  
 Make Don Pasquito  
 Seem still mouldier ?

## 6.—TRIO FOR TWO CATS AND A TROMBONE

LONG steel grass—  
 The white soldiers pass—  
 The light is braying like an ass.  
 See  
 The tail Spanish jade  
 With hair black as nightshade  
 Worn as a cockade !  
 Flee  
 Her eyes' gasconade  
 And her gown's parade  
 (As stiff as a brigade).  
 Tee-hee !  
 The hard and braying light  
 Is zebra'd black and white  
 It will take away the slight  
 And free,  
 Tinge of the mouth-organ sound,  
 (Oyster-stall notes) oozing round  
 Her flounces as they sweep the ground.  
 The  
 Trumpet and the drum  
 And the martial cornet come  
 To make the people dumb—  
 But we  
 Won't wait for sly-foot night  
 (Moonlight, watered milk-white, bright)  
 To make clear the declaration  
 Of our Paphian vocation,  
 Beside the castanetted sea,  
 Where stalks Il Capitaneo



Swaggart braggadocio  
 Sword and moustachio—  
 He  
 Is green as a cassada  
 And his hair is an armada.  
 To the jade “Come kiss me harder”  
 He called across the battlements as she  
 Heard our voices thin and shrill  
 As the steely grasses’ thrill,  
 Or the sound of the onycha  
 When the phoca has the pica  
 In the palace of the Queen Chinee !

### 7.—MADAME MOUSE TROTS

“ Dame Souris t otte gris dans le noir.”—VERLAINE.

MADAME MOUSE trots,  
 Grey in the black night !  
 Madame Mouse trots :  
 Furred is the light.  
 The elephant-trunks  
 Trumpet from the sea . . .  
 Grey in the black night  
 The mouse trots free.  
 Hoarse as a dog’s bark  
 The heavy leaves are furled . . .  
 The cat’s in his cradle,  
 All’s well with the world !

## 8.—FOUR IN THE MORNING

CRIED the navy-blue ghost  
 Of Mr. Belaker  
 The allegro negro cocktail-shaker,  
 "Why did the cock crow,  
 Why am I lost,  
 Down the endless road to Infinity toss'd?  
 The tropical leaves are whispering white  
 As water; I race the wind in my flight.  
 The white lace houses are carried away  
 By the tide; far out they float and sway.  
 White is the nursemaid on the parade.  
 Is she real, as she flirts with me unafraid?  
 Such honeyed imbecility lies  
 In the eternal July skies  
 As in her giggling curls. In swirls  
 The houses fade, and drop in pearls.  
 I raced through the leaves as white as water . . .  
 Ghostly, flowed over the nursemaid, caught her,  
 Left her . . . edging the far-off sand  
 Is the foam of the sirens' Metropole and Grand,  
 And along the parade I am blown and lost,  
 Down the endless road to Infinity toss'd.  
 The guinea-fowl plumaged houses sleep . . .  
 On one, I saw the lone grass weep,  
 Where only the whimpering greyhound wind  
 Chased me, raced me, for what it could find."

And there in the black and furry boughs  
 How slowly, coldly, old Time grows,

Where the pigeons smelling of gingerbread,  
 And the spectacled owls so deeply read,  
 And the sweet ring-doves of curded milk,  
 Watch the Infanta's gown of silk  
 In the ghost-room tall where the governante  
 Gesticulates lente, and walks andante.  
 "Madam, Princesses must be obedient ;  
 For a medicine now becomes expedient,—  
 Of five ingredients,—a diapente,"  
 Said the governante, fading lente . . .  
 In at the window then looked he,  
 The navy-blue ghost of Mr. Belaker,  
 The allegro negro cocktail-shaker,—  
 And his flattened face like the moon saw she,—  
 Rhinoceros-black (a flowing sea !).

9.—"I DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE"

WHEN

Don

Pasquito arrived at the seaside  
 Where the donkey's hide tide brayed, he  
 Saw the banditto Jo in a black cape  
 Whose slack shape waved like the sea—  
 Thetis wrote a treatise noting wheat is silver like the  
     sea ; the lovely cheat is sweet as foam ; Erotis  
     notices that she

Will

Steal

The

Wheat-king's luggage, like Babel  
 Before the League of Nations grew—

So Jo put the luggage and the label  
 In the pocket of Flo the Kangaroo.  
 Through trees like rich hotels that bode  
 Of dreamless ease fled she,  
 Carrying the load and goading the road  
 Through the marine scene to the sea.  
 "Don Pasquito, the road is eloping  
 With your luggage, though heavy and large ;  
 You must follow and leave your moping  
 Bride to my guidance and charge ! "

When

Don

Pasquito returned from the road's end,  
 Where vanilla-coloured ladies ride  
 From Sevilla, his mantilla'd bride and young friend  
 Were forgetting their mentor and guide.  
 For the lady and her friend from Le Touquet  
 In the very shady trees upon the sand  
 Were plucking a white satin bouquet  
 Of foam, while the sand's brassy band  
 Blared in the wind. Don Pasquito  
 Hid where the leaves drip with sweet . . .  
 But a word stung him like a mosquito . . .  
 For what they hear, they repeat !

#### 10.—ASS-FACE

ASS-FACE drank  
 The asses' milk of the stars . . .  
 The milky spirals as they sank  
 From heaven's saloons and golden bars,

Made a gown  
 For Columbine,  
 Spiriting down  
 On sands divine  
 By the asses' hide of the sea  
 (With each tide braying free).  
 And the beavers building Babel  
 Beneath each tree's thin beard,  
 Said, "Is it Cain and Abel  
 Fighting again we heard?"  
 It is Ass-face, Ass-face,  
 Drunk on the milk of the stars,  
 Who will spoil their houses of white lace—  
 Expelled from the golden bars!

## II.—THE OCTOGENARIAN

THE octogenarian  
 Leaned from his window,  
 To the valerian  
 Growing below  
 Said "My nightcap  
 Is only the gap  
 In the trembling thorn  
 Where the mild unicorn  
 With the little Infanta  
 Danced the lavolta  
 (Clapping hands : molto  
 Lent' eleganta)."  
 The man with the lanthorn  
 Peers high and low ;

No more  
 Than a snore  
 As he walks to and fro. . . .  
 Il Dottore the stoic  
 Culls silver herb  
 Beneath the superb  
 Vast moon azoic.

12.—SAID THE NOCTAMBULO

BENEATH the gilt capricorn  
 Said the Noctambulo  
 Turning his folio  
 To the papillio  
 By the night born :  
 "I nod my head  
 And the great Avatar  
 With his scented guitar  
 And his scimitar,  
 Pretends to be dead ;  
 And my snore forlorn  
 Is a horn  
 That will blow  
 Down the gilt capricorn  
 And the walled Jericho."

13.—CAME THE GREAT POPINJAY

CAME the great Popinjay  
 Smelling his nosegay :  
 In cages like grots  
 The birds sang gavottes.

" Herodiade's flea  
 Was named sweet Amanda,  
 She danced like a lady  
 From here to Uganda.  
 Oh, what a dance was there !  
 Long-haired, the candle  
 Salome-like tossed her hair  
 To a dance-tune by Handel " . . .  
 Dance they still ? Then came  
 Courtier Death,  
 Blew out the candle-flame  
 With civet breath.

#### 14.—BLACK MRS. BEHEMOTH

IN a room of the palace  
 Black Mrs. Behemoth  
 Gave way to wroth  
 And the wildest malice.  
 Cried Mrs. Behemoth,  
 " Come, court lady,  
 Doomed like a moth,  
 Through palace rooms shady ! "  
 The candle flame  
 Seemed a yellow pompion,  
 Sharp as a scorpion,  
 Nobody came . . .  
 Only a bugbear  
 Air unkind,  
 That bud-furred papoose,  
 The young spring wind,  
 Blew out the candle.

Where is it gone ?  
 To flat Coromandel  
 Rolling on !

15.—SAID KING POMPEY

SAID King Pompey, the emperor's ape,  
 Shuddering black in his temporal cape  
 Of dust : " The dust is everything—  
 The heart to love and the voice to sing,  
 Indianapolis,  
 And the Acropolis,  
 Also the hairy sky that we  
 Take for a coverlet comfortably." . . .  
 Said the Bishop  
 Eating his ketchup—  
 " There still remains Eternity  
 (Swelling the diocese)—  
 That elephantiasis,  
 The flunkeyed and trumpeting Sea ! "

16.—THE AVENUE

IN the huge and glassy room  
 Pantaloon, with his tail-feather  
 Spangled like the weather,  
 Panached, too, with many a plume,  
 Watched the monkey Fanfreluche,  
 Shivering in his gilded ruche,  
 Fawn upon the piano keys,  
 Flatter till they answer back  
 Through the scale of centuries,



Difference between white and black.  
 Winds like hurricanes of light  
 Change the blackest vacuums,  
 To a light-barred avenue—  
 Semitones of might and right ;  
 Then, from matter, life comes.  
 Down that lengthy avenue  
 Leading us we know not where,  
 Sudden views creep through the air ;  
 Oh the keys we stumble through,  
 Jungles splashed with violent light,  
 Promenades all hard and bright,  
 Long tails like the swish of seas,  
 Avenues of piano keys,  
 Meaning comes to bind the whole,  
 Fingers separate from thumbs,  
 Soon the shapeless tune comes :  
 Bestial efforts at man's soul,  
 What though notes are false and shrill—  
 Black streets tumbling down a hill ?  
 Fundamentally  
 I am you, and you are me—  
 Octaves fall as emptily.

### 17.—DARK SONG

THE fire was furry as a bear  
 And the flames purr. . . .  
 The brown bear rambles in his chain\*

\* This line and the two following lines came into my mind through hearing a song of Stravinski's. I do not know its name and I only heard it once ; but it contained lines rather like these.

Captive to cruel men  
 Through the dark and hairy wood . . .  
 The maid sighed, " All my blood  
 Is animal. They thought I sat  
 Like a household cat ;  
 But through the dark woods rambled I . . .  
 Oh, if my blood would die ! "  
 The fire had a bear's fur  
 It heard and knew . . .  
 The dark earth furry as a bear,  
 Grumbled too !

#### 18.—MARINER MEN

" WHAT are you staring at, mariner-man,  
 Wrinkled as sea-sand and old as the sea ? "  
 Those trains will run over their tails, if they can,  
 Snorting and sporting like porpoises. Flee  
 The burly, the whirligig wheels of the train,  
 As round as the world and as large again,  
 Running half the way over to Babylon, down  
 Through fields of clover to gay Troy town—  
 A-puffing their smoke as grey as the curl  
 On my forehead as wrinkled as sands of the sea !—  
 But what can that matter to you, my girl ?  
 (And what can that matter to me ?) "

#### 19.—FÊTE GALANTE

IN the muscadine-glowing noon  
 Under the arcade  
 Shaped like a cascade—

Where the shadows creep like a pantaloön—  
 The Abbé finished his rhodomontade.  
 “Madame la Marquise,  
 If you please,  
 When I must play with old ladies, ombre  
 In Hades’ shady bocage sombre—  
 Let me, though I am old,  
 Still perceive your gold  
 Fruit-sweet cheeks’ brocade,  
 Smiling among that peaceful shade. . . .”  
 But the Marquise in the bocage,  
 Laughs like the sharp rockage  
 Of her gallant grottoes, cold as water-wells,  
 And shakes her curls, as pearly as their shells !

## 20.—THE SATYR IN THE PERIWIG

THE Satyr Scarabombardon  
 Pulled periwig and breeches on :  
 “Grown old and stiff, this modern dress  
 Adds monstrously to my distress.  
 The gout within a hoofen heel  
 Is very hard to bear ; I feel  
 When crushed into a buckled shoe  
 The twinge will be redoubled, too ;  
 And when I walk in gardens green  
 And, weeping, think on what has been,  
 Then wipe one eye,—the other sees  
 The plums and cherries on the trees.  
 Small bird-quick women pass me by  
 With sleeves that flutter airily,

And baskets blazing like a fire  
 With laughing fruits of my desire :  
 Plums sunburnt as the King of Spain,  
 Gold-cheeked as any Nubian,  
 With strawberries all goldy-freckled,  
 Pears fat as thrushes and as speckled.  
 Pursue them ? . . . Yes, and squeeze a tear .  
 ' Please spare poor Satyr one, my dear ! ' .  
 ' Be off, sir ! Go and steal your own ! ' .  
 —Alas, poor Scarabombardon,  
 Trees rend his ruffles, stretch a twig,  
 Tear off a satyr's periwig ! ”

## 21.—THE OWL

THE currants, moonlit as Mother Bunch,  
 In their thick-bustled leaves were laughing like  
     Punch ;  
 And, ruched as their country waterfalls  
 The cherried maids walk beneath the dark walls.  
 Where the moonlight was falling thick as curd  
 Through the cherry-branches, half-unheard,  
 Said old Mrs. Bunch, the crop-eared owl,  
 To her gossip : “ If once I began to howl,  
 I am sure that my sobs would drown the seas—  
 With my ‘ oh’s,’ and my ‘ ah’s,’ and my ‘ oh dear  
     me’s ! ’  
 Everything wrong from cradle to grave—  
 No money to spend, no money to save ! ”  
 And the currant-bush began to rustle  
 As poor Mrs. Bunch arranged her bustle.

## 22.—ALCONE

THE vast grey trees  
 Float on the breeze—  
 Strings of grey pearls float  
 Vaguely from these,  
 And the Countess calls  
 To her two Pekinese—  
 (Korin's grey waterfalls—  
 Wave-like Chinoiseries).  
 Oh, this long avenue  
 Reaches for ever ! . . .  
 " Are you still true  
 Though our lives dissever ? "

The empty wind with the cat's voice sang  
 To the sun, as strange as the Admiral Yang,  
 Whose face is as flat as the notes  
 Of pianolas ; whose hair is like black frigate boats—  
 There is nothing to give  
 And nothing to buy—  
 It is too late to live  
 And too late to die,  
 Since the sad spring came again  
 With its red lacquer buds and its pain,  
 And that chapeau chinois\*  
 The frizzed wind blew  
 (Piquant minois)  
 In the long avenue !

\* A seventeenth-century court instrument.

## 23.—FADING SLOW

FADING slow,  
 And furred, is the snow  
 As the almond's sweet husk,  
 And smelling like musk.  
 The snow amygdaline  
 Under the eglantine  
 Where bristling stars shine  
 Like a gilt porcupine—  
 The snow confesses  
 The little Princesses  
 On their small chioppines  
 Dance under the orpines.  
 See the casuistries  
 Of their slant flutt'ring eyes—  
 Gilt as the zodiac  
 (Dancing herodiac).  
 Only the snow slides  
 Like gilded myrrh  
 From the rose-branches—hides  
 Rose-roots that stir !

## 24.—AN OLD WOMAN LAMENTS IN SPRING-TIME

I WALK on grass as soft as wool,  
 Or fluff that our old fingers pull  
 From beaver or from miniver,—  
 Sweet-sounding as a dulcimer,—  
  
 A poor old woman creeping where  
 The young can never pry and stare.  
 I am so old, I should be gone,—  
 Too old to warm in the kind sun

My wrinkled face ; my hat that flaps  
 Will hide it, and my cloak has laps  
 That trail upon the grass as I  
 Like some warm shade of spring creep by.

And all the laden fruit-boughs spread  
 Into a silver sound, but dead  
 Is the wild dew I used to know,  
 Nor will the morning music grow.

I sit beneath these coral boughs  
 Where the air's silver plumage grows  
 And flows like water with a sigh.  
 Fed with sweet milk of lilies, I

Still feel the dew like amber gums,  
 That from the richest spice-tree comes,  
 Drip down upon my turbanned head,  
 Trembling and ancient as the Dead,

Beneath these floating branches' shade.  
 Yet long ago, a lovely maid,  
 On grass, a fading silver tune  
 Played on an ancient dulcimer,  
 (And soft as wool of miniver)

I walked like a young antelope,  
 And Day was but an Ethiop,  
 Beside my fairness shining there—  
 Like black shade seemed the brightest air

When I was lovely as the snows,—  
 A fading starriness that flows . . .  
 Then, far-off Death seemed but the shade  
 That those heavenly branches made. . . .

## 25.—WATER PARTY

ROSE Castles  
 Those bustles  
 Beneath parasols seen !  
 Fat blondine pearls  
 Rondine curls  
 Seem. Bannerols sheen  
 The brave tartan  
 Waves' Spartan  
 Domes—(Crystal Palaces)  
 Where like fallacies  
 Die the calices  
 Of the water-flowers green.  
 Said the Dean  
 To the Queen,  
 On the tartan wave seen  
 " Each chilly  
 White lily  
 Has her own crinoline,  
 And the seraphs recline  
 On divans divine  
 In a smooth seventh heaven of polished pitch-pine."  
 Castellated,  
 Related  
 To castles the waves lean  
 Balmoral-like ;  
 They quarrel, strike  
 (As round as a rondine)  
 With sharp towers  
 The water-flowers  
 And, floating between,



Each châtelaine  
In the battle slain—  
Laid low by the Ondine.

26.—HORNPIPE

SAILORS come  
To the drum  
Out of Babylon ;  
Hobby-horses  
Foam, the dumb  
Sky rhinoceros-glum

Watched the courses of the breakers' rocking-horses  
and with Glaucis,  
Lady Venus on the settee of the horsehair sea !  
Where Lord Tennyson in laurels wrote a gloria free,  
In a borealic iceberg came Victoria ; she  
Knew Prince Albert's tall memorial took the colours  
of the floreal  
And the borealic iceberg ; floating on they see  
New-arisen Madam Venus for whose sake from far  
Came the fat and zebra'd emperor from Zanzibar  
Where like golden bouquets lay far Asia, Africa,  
Cathay,  
All laid before that shady lady by the fibroid Shah.  
Captain Fracasse stout as any water-butt came, stood  
With Sir Bacchus both a-drinking the black tarr'd  
grapes' blood  
Plucked among the tartan leafage  
By the furry wind whose grief age  
Could not wither—like a squirrel with a gold star-nut.  
Queen Victoria sitting shocked upon the rocking horse

Of a wave said to the Laureate, " This minx of course  
Is as sharp as any lynx and blacker-deeper than the  
drinks and quite as

Hot as any hottentot, without remorse !

For the minx,"

Said she,

" And the drinks,

You can see

Are hot as any hottentot and not the goods for  
me ! "

27.—WHEN SIR BEELZEBUB

WHEN

Sir

Beelzebub called for his syllabub in the hotel in Hell

Where Proserpine first fell,

Blue as the gendarmerie were the waves of the sea,

(Rocking and shocking the bar-maid).

Nobody comes to give him his rum but the

Rim of the sky hippopotamus-glum

Enhances the chances to bless with a benison

Alfred Lord Tennyson crossing the bar laid

With cold vegetation from pale deputations

Of temperance workers (all signed In Memoriam)

Hoping with glory to trip up the Laureate's feet,

(Moving in classical metres) . . .

Like Balaclava, the lava came down from the

Roof, and the sea's blue wooden gendarmerie

Took them in charge while Beelzebub roared for his  
rum.

. . . None of them come !

# THIRTY-EIGHT BUCOLIC COMEDIES

TO ARNOLD BENNETT

*" Countrysides where the people know that Destiny is befouled and has feathers like a hen . . . landscapes where the leaves have an animal fleshiness, and old pig-snouted Darkness grunts and roots in the bowels. There, the country gentlemen are rooted in the mould ; and they know that beyond the sensual aspect of the sky (that harsh and goatish tent) something hides—but they have forgotten what it is. So they wander, aiming with their guns at mocking feathered creatures that have learnt the wonder and secret of movement, beneath clouds that are so low-hung that they seem nothing but wooden potting-sheds for the no-longer disastrous stars . . . (they will win the prize at the local flower-show). The water of the shallow lake gurgles like a stoat, murderously ; the little unfledged feathers of the foam have forgotten how to fly, and the country gentleman wanders, hunting for something—hunting ! "*—From an essay by the Author.

## I.—EARLY SPRING

THE wooden châteaux of the cloud  
Hang down their dull blunt ropes to shroud

Red crystal bells upon each bough  
(Fruit-buds that whimper). No winds slough

Our faces, furred with cold like red  
Furred buds of satyr springs, long dead !

The cold wind creaking in my blood  
Seems part of it, as grain of wood ;

Among the coarse goat-locks of snow  
Mamzelle still drags me, to and fro ;

Her feet make marks like centaur hoofs  
In hairy snow ; her cold reproofs

Die, and her strange eyes look oblique  
As the slant crystal buds that creak.

If she could think me distant, she  
In the snow's goat-locks certainly

Would try to milk those teats, the buds,  
Of their warm sticky milk—the cuds

Of strange long-past fruit-hairy springs—  
Beginnings of first earthy things !

## 2.—SPRING

WHEN spring begins, the maids in flocks  
Walk in soft fields, and their sheepskin locks

Fall shadowless, soft as music, round  
Their jonquil eyelids, and reach the ground.

Where the small fruit-buds begin to harden  
Into sweet tunes in the palace garden,

They peck at the fruit-buds' hairy herds  
With their lips like the gentle bills of birds.

. . . . .

But King Midas heard the swan-bosomed sky  
Say “ All is surface and so must die.”

And he said : “ It is spring ; I will have a feast  
To woo eternity ; for my least

Palace is like a berg of ice ;  
And the spring winds, for birds of paradise,

With the leaping goat-footed waterfalls cold,  
Shall be served for me on a dish of gold

By a maiden fair as an almond-tree,  
With hair like the waterfalls’ goat-locks ; she

Has lips like that jangling harsh pink rain,  
The flower-bells that spirt on the trees again.”

In Midas’ garden the simple flowers  
Laugh, and the tulips are bright as the showers,

For spring is here ; the auriculas,  
And the Emily-coloured primulas

Bob in their pinafores on the grass  
As they watch the gardener’s daughter pass.

Then King Midas said, “ At last I feel  
Eternity conquered beneath my heel

Like the glittering snake of Paradise—  
And you are my Eve ! ”—but the maiden flies,

Like the leaping goat-footed waterfalls  
Singing their cold, forlorn madrigals.

## 3.—AUBADE

JANE, Jane,  
 Tall as a crane,  
 The morning light creaks down again ;

Comb your cockscomb-ragged hair,  
 Jane, Jane, come down the stair.

Each dull blunt wooden stalactite  
 Of rain creaks, hardened by the light,

Sounding like an overtone  
 From some lonely world unknown.

But the creaking empty light  
 Will never harden into sight,

Will never penetrate your brain  
 With overtones like the blunt rain.

The light would show (if it could harden)  
 Eternities of kitchen garden,

Cockscomb flowers that none will pluck,  
 And wooden flowers that 'gin to cluck.

In the kitchen you must light  
 Flames as staring, red and white,

As carrots or as turnips, shining  
 Where the cold dawn light lies whining.

Cockscomb hair on the cold wind  
 Hangs limp, turns the milk's weak mind. . . .  
     Jane, Jane,  
     Tall as a crane,  
     The morning light creaks down again!

#### 4.—FOX TROT

    OLD  
     Sir  
         Faulk,  
     Tall as a stork,  
 Before the honeyed fruits of dawn were ripe, would  
     walk,  
 And stalk with a gun  
 The reynard-coloured sun,  
 Among the pheasant-feathered corn the unicorn has  
     torn, forlorn the  
 Smock-faced sheep  
 Sit  
     And  
     Sleep ;  
 Periwigged as William and Mary, weep . . .  
 “ Sally, Mary, Mattie, what's the matter, why cry ? ”  
 The huntsman and the reynard-coloured sun and I  
     sigh ;  
 “ Oh, the nursery-maid Meg  
 With a leg like a peg  
 Chased the feathered dreams like hens, and when they  
     laid an egg  
 In the sheepskin  
 Meadows

Where,  
 The serene King James would steer,  
 Horse and hounds, then he  
 From the shade of a tree  
 Picked it up as spoil to boil for nursery tea," said the  
     mourners. In the  
 Corn, towers strain,  
 Feathered tall as a crane,  
 And whistling down the feathered rain, old Noah  
     goes again—  
 An old dull mome  
 With a head like a pome,  
 Seeing the world as a bare egg,  
 Laid by the feathered air ; Meg  
 Would beg three of these  
 For the nursery teas  
 Of Japhet, Shem, and Ham ; she gave it  
 Underneath the trees,  
 Where the boiling  
     Water  
     Hissed,  
 Like the goose-king's feathered daughter—kissed,  
 Pot and pan and copper kettle  
 Put upon their proper mettle,  
 Lest the Flood—the Flood—the Flood begin again  
     through these !

#### 5.—CACOPHONY FOR CLARINET

SAID the dairymaid  
 With her hooped petticoat  
 Swishing like water . . .  
 To the hemlocks she said, " Afraid



Am I of each sheep and goat—  
 For I am Pan's daughter ! ”  
 Dark as Africa and Asia  
 The vast trees weep—  
 The Margravine learned as Aspasia,  
 Has fallen asleep.  
 Her small head, beribboned  
 With her yellow satin hair,  
 Like satin ribbons, butter-yellow,  
 That the faunal noon has made more mellow  
 Has drooped asleep . . .  
 And a snore forlorn  
 Sounds like Pan's horn.  
 On pointed toe I creep—  
 Look through the diamonded pane  
 Of the window in the dairy—  
 Then out I slip again,  
 In my hooped petticoat like old Morgane the fairy.  
 Like a still-room maid's yellow print gown  
 Are the glazed chintz buttercups of summer  
 Where the kingly cock in a feathered smock and a  
     red-gold crown  
 Rants like a barn-door mummer.  
 And I heard the Margravine say  
 To the ancient bewigged Abbé  
 “ I think it is so clever  
 Of people to discover  
 New planets—and how ever  
 Do they find out what their names are ? ”  
 Then, clear as the note of a clarinet, her hair  
 Called Pan across the fields, Pan like the forlorn  
     wind,

From the Asian, African darkness of the trees in his  
lair—

To play with her endless vacancy of mind !

# 6.—ROSE

(IMITATED FROM SKELTON)

IN the fields like an Indian mazery  
That the foolish moon has flowered,  
Rose Bertin is walking lazily where  
The fringe of the field is bowered

With trees as dark as the ancient creeds  
Of China and of Ind . . .

Rose Bertin walks through the fields' pearled weeds  
Where haunts the satyr wind.

"Where are you going to, my pretty maid,"  
That negroid satyr sighs . . .

"To feed my pretty chucks, sir," she said—  
"Each feathered thing that flies.

To feed them with the sun's gold grains  
In the fields' sparse Indian chintz ;  
But now those grains are spilt like rains,  
And still light feathery glints

Fly in my brain." . . . Those bright birds flock,  
The butterbump, the urban  
Ranee stork, the turkey-cock  
(Red paladin in a turban),

The crane who talks through his long nose,  
 The plump and foolish quail—  
 In their feathered robes they follow Rose,  
 And never once they fail.

And Harriet, Susan, Rose and Polly,  
 Silken and frilled as a pigeon  
 Sleek them and praise the golden folly  
 That made laughing Rose a religion.

7.—GARDENER JANUS CATCHES A NAIAD

BASKETS of ripe fruit in air  
 The bird-songs seem, suspended where

Between the hairy leaves trills dew,  
 All tasting of fresh green anew.

Ma'am, I've heard your laughter flare  
 Through your waspish-gilded hair :

Feathered masks,  
 Pots of peas,  
 Janus asks  
 Naught of these,  
 Creaking water  
 Brightly stripèd,  
 Now I've caught her—  
 Shrieking biped.  
 Flute sounds jump  
 And turn together,

Changing clumps  
 Of glassy feather.  
 In among the  
 Pots of peas  
 Naiad changes—  
 Quick as these.

S.—POPULAR SONG

FOR CONSTANT LAMBERT

LILY O'GRADY,

Billy and shady,

Longing to be

A lazy lady,

Walked by the cupolas, gables in the

Lake's Georgian stables,

In a fairy tale like the heat intense,

And the mist in the woods when across the fence

The children gathering strawberries

Are changed by the heat into negresses,

Though their fair hair

Shines there

Like gold-haired planets, Calliope, Io,

Pomona, Antiope, Echo, and Clio.

Then Lily O'Grady,

Billy and shady,

Sauntered along like a

Lazy lady.

Beside the waves' haycocks her gown with tucks

Was of satin the colour of shining green ducks,

And her fol-de-rol

Parasol

Was a great gold sun o'er the haycocks shining,

But she was a negress black as the shade  
 That time on the brightest lady laid.  
 Then a satyr, dog-haired as trunks of trees,  
 Began to flatter, began to tease,  
 And she ran like the nymphs with golden foot  
 That trampled the strawberry, buttercup root,  
 In the thick gold dew as bright as the mesh  
 Of dead Panōpe's golden flesh,  
 Made from the music whence were born  
 Memphis and Thebes in the first hot morn,  
 —And ran, to wake  
 In the lake,  
 Where the water-ripples seem hay to rake.  
 And Charlottine,  
 Adeline,  
 Round rose-bubbling Victorine,  
 And the other fish  
 Express a wish  
 For mastic mantles and gowns with a swish ;  
 And bright and slight as the posies  
 Of buttercups and of roses,  
 And buds of the wild wood-lilies  
 They chase her, as frisky as fillies.  
 The red retriever-haired satyr  
 Can whine and tease her and flatter,  
 But Lily O'Grady,  
 Silly and shady,  
 In the deep shade is a lazy lady ;  
 Now Pompey's dead, Homer's read,  
 Heliogabalus lost his head,  
 And shade is on the brightest wing,  
 And dust forbids the bird to sing.

## 9.—THE FIVE MUSICIANS

THE blue-leaved fig-trees swell with laughter,  
Gold fissures split the ripe fruits after,

And like a gold-barred tiger, shade  
Leaps in the darkness that they made.

The long-ribbed leaves shed light that dapples  
Silenus like a tun of apples ;

Gold-freckled, fruit-shaped faces stare  
At nymphs with bodies white as air.

The ancient house rocked emptily  
“Horned brothers, creep inside and see

Through my tall windows : the abode  
Of noise is on the dusty road.”

They creep . . . strange hands are on the hasp . . .  
Silenus, sleepy as a wasp,

Amid the fruit-ripe heat, as in  
An apricot or nectarine,

Replies, “The dust is wise and old . . .  
For glistening fruits and Ophir’s gold

Are gathered there to wake again  
In our flesh, like a tune’s refrain.”

The five musicians with their bray  
Shatter the fruit-ripe heat of day ;

Their faces, wrinkled, kind, and old,  
Are masked by the hot sun with gold ;

Like fountains of blue water, gush  
Their beards. Strange-feathered birds that hush,

Their song, move not so proud as these  
Smiles floating, ageless courtesies.

They stand upon the dust outside ;  
Their tunes like drops of water died.

Yet still we hear their slow refrain,  
“ King Pharaoh, gay lad, come again ! ”

Miss Nettybun, beneath the tree,  
Perceives that it is time for tea

And takes the child, a muslined moon,  
Through the lustrous leaves of afternoon.

And tea-time comes with strawberry  
Jam—yet where, oh *where*, is she ?

On that music floating, gone  
To China and to Babylon ;

Never again she'll go to bed  
In the sleepy house of Sir Rotherham Redde !

## 10.—SPRINGING JACK

GREEN wooden leaves clap light away  
From the young flowers as white as day,—

Clear angel-face on hairy stalk ;  
(Soul grown from flesh, an ape's young talk.)

The showman's face is cubed, clear as  
The shapes reflected in a glass,

Of water—(Glog, glut, a ghost's speech  
Fumbling for space from each to each.)

The fusty showman fumbles, must  
Fit in a particle of dust

The universe, for fear it gain  
Its freedom from my box of brain.

Yet dust bears seeds that grow to grace  
Behind my crude-striped wooden face,

As I, a puppet tinsel-pink  
Leap on my springs, learn how to think,

Then like the trembling golden stalk  
Of some long-petalled star, I walk

Through the dark heavens, until dew  
Falls on my eyes and sense thrills through.



## 11.—THE HIGHER SENSUALISM

QUEEN CIRCE, the farmer's wife at the Fair,  
Met three sailor-men stumping there,

Who came from the parrot-plumed sea, Yo-Ho !  
And each his own trumpet began to blow.

"We come," said they, "from the Indian seas,  
All bright as a parrot's feathers, and these

Break on gold sands of the perfumed isles,  
Where the fruit is soft as a siren's smiles,

And the sun is as black as a Nubian.  
We singed the beard of the King of Spain. . . .

Then we wandered once more on the South Sea  
strand

Where the icebergs seem Heavenly Mansions fanned

By the softest wind from the groves of spice,  
And the angels like birds of paradise

Flit there : and we caught this queer-plumaged boy  
(An angel, he calls himself) for a toy."

. . . . .

The Angel sighed : "Please, ma'am, if you'll spare  
Me a trumpet, the angels will come to the Fair ;

For even an angel must have his fling,  
And ride on the roundabout, in the swing ! "

She gave him a trumpet, but never a blare  
Reached the angels from Midsummer Fair,

Though he played, "Will you hear a Spanish lady?"  
And "Jack the Sailor," "Sweet Nelly," "Trees  
shady"—

For only the gay hosannas of flowers  
Sound, loud as brass bands, in those heavenly bowers.

Queen Circe said, "Young man, I will buy  
Your plumaged coat for my pig to try—

Then with angels he'll go a-dancing hence  
From sensuality into sense!"

The Fair's tunes like cherries and apricots  
Ripened; the angels danced from their green grotts;

Their hair was curled like the fruit on the trees . . .  
Rigaudon, sarabande, danced they these.

And the pig points his toe and he curves his wings,  
The music starts, and away he flings—

Dancing with angels all in a round,  
Hornpipe and rigaudon on the Fair's ground.

## 12.—KING COPHETUA AND THE BEGGAR MAID

THE five-pointed crude pink tinsel star  
Laughed loudly at King Cophetua;

Across the plain that is black as mind  
And limitless, it laughed unkind

To see him whitened like a clown  
With the moon's flour, come in a golden crown.

The moon shone softer than a peach  
Upon the round leaves in its reach ;

The dark air sparkled like a sea—  
The beggar-maid leaned out through a tree

And sighed (that pink flower-spike full of honey),  
“ Oh, for Love ragged as Time, with no money ! ”

Then through the black night the gardener's boy  
As sunburnt as hay, came whispering, “ Troy

Long ago was as sweet as the honey-chimes  
In the flower-bells jangling into rhymes,

And, oh, my heart's sweet as a honey-hive  
Because of a wandering maid, and I live

But to tend the pale flower-bells of the skies  
That shall drop down their dew on her sleeping  
eyes.”

### 13.—CLOWN ARGHEB'S SONG

CLOWN ARGHEB the honey-bee  
Counted his money, “ See  
In the bandstand in Hell,  
Buzzing, the tunes that fell  
Raise up glass houses, round  
Serres-chaudes as forcing-ground,  
Lest bald heads harden  
In Hell's kitchen garden.”

Poet and pedagogue  
 Bump their bald heads, agog—  
 (Melon and marrow,  
 And cucumber narrow).  
 Next day comes Proserpine,  
 Parasol raised, and “ See,  
 Ma’am,” says the gardener, “ these  
 Thoughts are as thick as peas ! ”  
 So sighed the clown, singing  
 Buzz, and still clinging,  
 To no horizontal bars,  
 But the pink freezing stars !

#### 14.—PAVANE

Annunciata stands  
 On the flat lands  
 Under the pear-tree  
 (Jangling sweetly). See,  
 18 The curé-black leaves  
 Are cawing like a rook . . .  
 Annunciata grieves,  
 “ No young man will look  
 At me with my harsh jangling hair  
 Pink as the one pear  
 (A flapping crude fish tinsel-pink  
 Flapping across the consciousness  
 Like laughter) and my tattered dress.”  
 Then from the brink  
 Of the deep well,  
 Sounding like a bell,  
 From the castles under water

The old men seek the beggar's daughter . . .  
 Some were wrinkled grey  
 From suicide grown gay  
 And smiling, some were seen  
 With ivy limbs green  
 And gnarled with the water . . .  
 "Dance a pavane, beggar's daughter" . . .  
 They wooed her with book  
 And the water's tuneless bell  
 Wooed her as well—  
 A water-hidden sound achieves ;  
 And cawing like a rook  
 Were the curé-black leaves . . .  
 One feather-breast of dew was grey  
 Upon round leaves—they fled away.  
 Only a moaning sound  
 From the castles that lie drowned  
 Beneath the fruit-boughs of the water  
 Reached the beggar's daughter.

#### 15.—POOR MARTHA

BY white wool houses thick with sleep,  
 Wherein pig-snouted small winds creep,

With our white muslin faces clean,  
 We slip to see what can be seen.

Those rustling corn-sheaves the gold stars  
 Drop grain between the window-bars

Among dark leaves, all velvety—  
 (So seem the shadows) and we see

Crazed Martha tie up her brown hair  
With the moon's blue ribbons, stare

At candles that are lit in vain—  
They cannot penetrate her brain :

Their tinsel jargon seems to be  
Incomprehensibility

To Martha's mind, though every word  
Of her's they echo, like that bird

Of brilliant plumage, whose words please  
The Indians by their bright-plumed seas.

The Fair's tunes bloom like myosotis,  
Smooth-perfumèd stephanotis ;

We children come with twisted curls  
Like golden corn-sheaves, or fat pearls,

Like ondines in blue muslin dance  
Around her ; never once a glance

She gives us : “ Can my love be true ?  
He promised he would bring me blue

Ribbons to tie up my brown hair.  
He promised me both smooth and fair

That he would dive through brightest plumes  
Of Indian seas for pearls, where glooms

The moon's blue ray ; in her sleeping-chamber  
Find me Thetis' fan of amber.”

. . . . .

The candles preen and sleek their feathers . . .  
 “ Pretty lady ! ”    “ Sweet June weathers.”

But silence now lies all around  
 Poor Martha, since her love is drowned.

# 16.—THREE POOR WITCHES

FOR W. T. WALTON

WHIRRING, walking  
 On the tree-top,  
 Three poor witches  
 Mow and mop.  
 Three poor witches  
 Fly on switches  
 Of a broom,  
 From their cottage room.  
 Like goat's beard rivers,  
 Black and lean,  
 Are Moll and Meg,  
 And Myrrhaline.

“ Of those whirring witches, Meg ”  
 (Bird-voiced fire screams)

“ Has one leg ;  
 Moll has two, on tree-tops see,  
 Goat-foot Myrrhaline has three ! ”

When she walks  
 Turned to a wreath  
 Is every hedge ;  
 She walks beneath  
 Flowered trees like water  
 Splashing down ;  
 Her rich and dark silk  
 Plumcake gown

Has folds so stiff  
 It stands alone  
 Within the fields  
 When she is gone.  
 And when she walks  
 Upon the ground  
 You'd never know  
 How she can bound  
 Upon the tree-tops, for she creeps  
 With a snail's slow silver pace ;  
 Her milky silky wrinkled face  
 Shows no sign of her disgrace.  
 But walking on each  
 Leafy tree-top,—  
 Those old witches,  
 See them hop !  
 Across the blue-leaved  
 Mulberry tree  
 Of the rustling  
 Bunchèd sea,  
 To China, thick trees whence there floats  
 From wrens' and finches' feathered throats  
 Songs. The North Pole is a tree  
 With thickest chestnut flowers. . . . We see  
 Them whizz and turn  
 Through Lisbon, churn  
 The butter-pats to coins gold,  
 Sheep's milk to muslin, thin and cold.  
 Then one on one leg,  
 One on two,  
 One on three legs  
 Home they flew



To their cottage ; there one sees  
 And hears no sound but wind in trees ;  
 One candle spills out thick gold coins  
 Where quilted dark with tree shade joins.

17.—COUNTRY COUSIN (*three variations*)

“ A coral neck and a little song, so very extra, so very Susie.”  
 GERTRUDE STEIN.

TO DOROTHY TODD

I

*Perrine*

IN summer when the rose-bushes  
 Have names like all the sweetest hushes  
 In a bird's song,—Susan, Hannah,  
 Martha, Harriet, and Rosannah,  
 Then round and flaxen blond leaves seem  
 Like country clouds of clouted cream,  
 And blossoms grow on trees above  
 As soft and thick as any dove.

The little girls go plucking sweet  
 Soft blooms with hands like coral feet  
 Of a piteous small sad bird  
 Upon a budding branch half heard,  
 While dew in trills, and dew in pearls,  
 Falls down upon their budding curls ;  
 And ribbon blue as country streams,  
 Clear as a nightingale's song, dreams  
 Adown their frocks ; each coral neck  
 Is sweet enough for birds to peck ;  
 Their voices seem gold bells of corn,  
 The country winds pass by in scorn.

“How sweet,” said Jeanne, “it would have been  
 If, when we reached our home, Perrine  
 Was there to greet us ; golden grain  
 We’d give her, if she’d come again.

She was so faithful and so good,—  
 The humble hen we bought for food,  
 Then pitied, because she was lame  
 And was so trustful and so tame.

We nursed her back to health, and she  
 Became one of the family ;  
 Of ragged robin was her bed,  
 Pink as her eyes ; she laid her head

Down on this as she was bade ;  
 Her crumpled crown looked limp and sad  
 And once she gave a little sigh,  
 But no complaint, when I was nigh.

And when for two weeks she had lain  
 There ill, she gained her strength again ;  
 And then it seemed she found some beauty  
 In her humble lowly duty.

For each dawn, when through window-bars  
 Fade the straggling chickweed stars,  
 Perrine, forgetting her lame leg,  
 Would lay a sparkling golden egg.

For she had only this to give  
 And show her love ; if those who live  
 With hopes of heaven ever gave  
 So much love, that, alone, could save

Our childish souls, made crystal clear,  
 And heaven itself would seem more dear.  
 But she is dead, our dear Perrine ;  
 And if, tiptoe, we peep between

The thick leaves round the window bars,  
 Her eyes like pinkest campion stars  
 No more can peep at us, so kind  
 You'd think an angel swept her mind.

But if there is a heaven above  
 For hens who so must prove their love  
 I think that there, 'mid small wise flowers,  
 Perrine must pass the heavenly hours.

While there at last her five-point crown  
 Is gold, that crumpled, once lolled down . . .  
 But now Perrine is dead, her fame  
 Is everywhere, though she was lame,—

And great kings come with golden crowns,  
 Sit by our leafy fire,—their towns  
 Deserting for Perrine's gold egg.  
 They'd try to buy it, steal it, beg.

Her beauty, white as any billow  
 Would wake King Canute from his pillow—  
 King Canute, lulled by his own snore,  
 Hearing the sound of wave no more

As he lies on a cloudy pillow  
 Beneath the weeping green willow.”  
 So say the kings as they implore.  
 But dear Perrine lays eggs no more.

And in the briars of the cold wind  
 Where never rose blooms, hard, unkind,  
 I heard a pirate's voice that sighed ;  
 His face seemed the horizons wide :

“ I was a pirate, long ago ;  
 But Time, if loaded with sweet snow  
 Of hawthorn, or with coral spray  
 Moves slowly, yet will die away.

Green honeycombs from flowers of limes,  
 The caverns, chiming sweet as rhymes  
 Along a flowery story seem ;  
 We sailed by shores like some deep dream,

We sailed where every coral spray  
 Seemed like branches of pink may,  
 Fought Spanish ships whose patacoons  
 Seemed fireflies in the leafiest Junes.

But all these treasures I will leave,  
 And will not fret for them, or grieve,  
 If in these leafy lanes I find  
 An egg of Perrine good and kind.”

Like housekeeping old hens that rustle  
 In a useful feather bustle,  
 From cottages, old women stoop—  
 Each cottage low as a hen-coop ;

And the farmer and his old wife come  
 With candle-flames like a ripe plum.  
 “ Why do your tears fall fast as rain,  
 When everything is all in vain ? ”

So now, by wintry hen-plumed seas,  
 In cackling grass the kings all freeze,—  
 The kings that their great castles leave  
 For dear Perrine . . . they weep and grieve

With gold crowns nodding in their dotage,  
 Where ragged flowers surround the cottage  
 (Perched upon a hen's thin legs).  
 Only the whining cold wind begs

Round each old king's long chequered dress,  
 And all the rest is nothingness.  
 Yet still our tears fall fast as rains . . .  
 But oh, the treasure Heaven gains.

## II

### *Song*

IN summer when the rose-bushes  
 Have names like all the sweetest hushes  
 In a bird's song,—Susan, Hannah,  
 Martha, Harriet, and Rosannah,  
 My coral neck  
 And my little song  
 Are very extra  
 And very Susie ;  
 A little kiss like a gold bee stings  
 My childish life so sweet and rosy . . .  
 Like country clouds of clouted cream  
 The round and flaxen blond leaves seem,  
 And dew in trills  
 And dew in pearls  
 Falls from every gardener's posy ;

Marguerites, roses,  
 A flaxen lily,  
 Water-chilly,  
 Buttercups where the dew reposes  
 In fact each flower young and silly,  
 The gardener ties in childish posies.

## III

*Song*

THE clouds are bunchèd roses,  
 And the bunches seem  
 As thick as cream,  
 Country dozes and I dream.  
 In a gown like a cauliflower.  
 My country cousin is—  
 So said Susie  
 And her sister Liz.  
 Blossoms hang on trees above,  
 Soft and thick as any dove,  
 They mock my love ;  
 Yet I pluck those feathers sweet  
 With my cold coral hands so like the  
 Small cold feet  
 Of a little sad bird,  
 On a budding branch heard.

## 18.—WHEN THE SAILOR

WHEN the sailor left the seas  
 They swayed like June's thick-leavèd trees ;  
  
 The winds seemed only nightingales  
 That sang so sweetly leafy tales

Of rustic vows among deep leaves,—  
Of Thisbe's love, how Priam grieves.

The sailor stumps his wooden leg  
In shady lanes where he must beg,

Till skies shone like the fields he knew,—  
Golden with buttercups and dew ;

Then, slightly drunk, he sees an Inn  
Beckon him to step within.

The parlour runs on feathered feet  
Bird-like, " Neptune, thee we greet,"

It cries ; the flames, an albatross,  
Float on blue air like waves that toss,

Bird-like shriek, " The sea floats still  
Just above the window-sill ! "

" No, it is June's thick blue trees."  
Heeding not the sound of these

Across the bar, through silver spray  
Of the sweet and blossomed may,

Leaned the Circean landlady,  
With her dark locks leafy shady,

And eyes that seemed the dancing sound  
Of waves upon enchanted ground.

“ Did you batter down Troy’s wall,—  
(Silver hawthorn trees grown tall),

Did you beg the Khan for mercy,  
Did you meet the lady Circe ? ”

“ She is changing like the sea . . .  
Shadow, like a lovely lady

With an elegant footfall,  
Never seemed so lovely ; all

Her airs were beautiful as sleep,  
Or dew too fair for flower to weep.”

#### 19.—FLEECING TIME

QUEEN VENUS, like a bunch of roses,  
Fat and pink, that splashed dew closes,

Underneath dark mulberry trees,  
Wandered with the fair-haired breeze.

Among the dark leaves, preening wings,  
Sit golden birds of light ; each sings,

“ Will you accept the blue muslin ? ”  
As they peck the blackamoor mulberries’ skin.

Then came a sheep like a sparkling cloud ;  
“ Oh, ma’am, please, ma’am, sleek me proud,

Come fleece and comb my golden wool  
And do not mind, ma’am, if you pull ! ”



Her flocks came thick as the mulberries  
That grow on the dark, clear mulberry trees,

As thick as the daisies in the sky . . .  
Prince Paris, Adonis ; as each passed by

She cried, “ Come feed on buds as cold  
As my fleeced lamb-tailed river’s gold,

And you shall dance like each golden bird  
Of light that sings in dark trees unheard,

And you shall skip like my lamb-tailed river,  
In my buttercup fields for ever.”

The lady Venus, with hair thick as wool,  
Cried “ Come and be fleeced—each sheepish fool ! ”

## 20.—COUNTRY DANCE

THAT hobnailed goblin, the bob-tailed Hob,  
Said, “ It is time I began to rob.”  
For strawberries bob, hob-nob with the pearls  
Of cream (like the curls of the dairy girls),  
And flushed with the heat and fruitish-ripe  
Are the gowns of the maids who dance to the pipe.  
Chase a maid ?  
She’s afraid !  
“ Go gather a bob-cherry kiss from a tree,  
But don’t, I prithee, come bothering me ! ”  
She said—  
As she fled.

The snouted satyrs drink clouted cream  
 'Neath the chestnut-trees as thick as a dream ;  
 So I went,  
 And leant,  
 Where none but the doltish coltish wind  
 Nuzzled my hand for what it could find.  
 As it neighed,  
 I said,  
 " Don't touch me, sir, don't touch me, I say,  
 You'll tumble my strawberries into the hay."  
 Those snow-mounds of silver that bee, the spring,  
 Has sucked his sweetness from, I will bring  
 With fair-haired plants and with apples chill  
 For the great god Pan's high altar . . . I'll spill  
 Not one !  
 So, in fun,  
 We rolled on the grass and began to run  
 Chasing that gaudy satyr the Sun ;  
 Over the haycocks, away we ran  
 Crying, " Here be berries as sunburnt as Pan ! "  
 But Silenus  
 Has seen us. . . .  
 He runs like the rough satyr Sun.

Come away !

## 21.—EVENING

PRINCE ABSOLAM and Sir Rotherham Redde  
 Rode on a rocking-horse home to bed,

With dreams like cherries ripening big  
 Beneath the frondage of each wig.

In a flat field on the road to Sleep  
They ride together, a-hunting sheep

That like the swan-bright fountains seem ;  
Their tails hang down as meek as a dream.

Prince Absolam seems a long-fleeced bush,  
The heat's tabernacle, in the hush

And the glamour of eve, when buds the dew  
Into bright tales that never come true ;

And as he passes a cherry-tree  
Caught by his long hair, bound is he,

While all his gold fleece flows like water  
Into the lap of Sir Rotherham's daughter.

Come then, and sit upon the grass  
With cherries to pelt you, as bright as glass—

Vermilion bells that sound as clear  
As the bright swans whose sighing you hear

When they float to their crystal death  
Of water, scarcely plumed by the breath

Of air—so clear in the round leaves  
They look, this crystal sound scarce grieves,

As they pelt down like tears fall'n bright  
From music or some deep delight.

The gardener cut off his beard of bast  
And tied up the fountain-tree, made it fast

And bound it together till who could see  
Which is Prince Absolam, which is the tree ?

Only his gold fleece flows like water  
Into the lap of Sir Rotherham's daughter ;

Sir Rotherham Redde gathers bags of gold  
Instead of the cherries ruddy and cold.

## 22.—ON THE VANITY OF HUMAN ASPIRATIONS

"In the time of King James I, the aged Countess of Desmond met her death, at the age of a hundred and forty years, through falling from an apple-tree."—*Chronicles of the times.*

IN the cold wind, towers grind round,  
Turning, turning, on the ground ;

In among the plains of corn  
Each tower seems a unicorn.

Beneath a sad umbrageous tree  
Anne, the goose-girl, could I see—

But the umbrageous tree behind  
Ne'er cast a shadow on her mind—

A goose-round breast she had, goose-brains,  
And a nose longer than a crane's ;

A clarinet sound, cold, forlorn,  
Her harsh hair, straight as yellow corn,

And her eyes were round, inane  
As the blue pebbles of the rain.

Young Anne, the goose-girl, said to me,  
“ ‘There’s been a sad catastrophe !

The aged Countess still could walk  
At a hundred and forty years, could talk,

And every eve in the crystal cool  
Would walk by the side of the clear fish-pool.

But to-day when the Countess took her walk  
Beneath the apple-trees, from their stalk

The apples fell like the red-gold crown  
Of those kings that the Countess had lived down,

And they fell into the crystal pool ;  
The grandmother fish enjoying the cool—

(Like the bright queens dyed on a playing-card  
They seemed as they fanned themselves, flat as  
hard)—

Floated in long and chequered gowns  
And darting, searched for the red-gold crowns

In the Castles drownèd long ago  
Where the empty years pass weedy-slow,

And the water is flat as equality  
That reigns over all in the heavenly

State we aspire to, where none can choose  
Which is the goose-girl, which is the goose . . .

But the Countess climbed up the apple-tree,  
Only to see what she could see—

Because to persons of her rank  
The usual standpoint is that of the bank ! . . .”

The goose-girl smoothed down her feather-soft  
Breast . . . “ When the Countess came aloft,

King James and his courtiers, dressed in smocks,  
Rode by a-hunting the red-gold fox,

And King James, who was giving the view-halloo  
Across the corn, too loudly blew,

And the next that happened was—what did I see  
But the Countess fall’n from the family tree !

Yet King James could only see it was naughty  
To aspire to the high at a hundred and forty,

‘ Though if ’ (as he said) ‘ she aspired to climb  
To Heaven—she certainly has, this time ! ’ ”

. . . And Anne, the goose-girl, laughed, “ Tee-hee,  
It was a sad catastrophe ! ”

### 23.—GREEN GEESE

THE trees were hissing like green geese . . .  
The words they tried to say were these :

“ When the great Queen Claude was dead  
They buried her deep in the potting-shed.”

The moon smelt sweet as nutmeg-root  
On the ripe peach-trees’ leaves and fruit,

And her sandal-wood body leans upright,  
To the gardener’s fright, through the summer night.

. . . . .

The bee-wing’d warm afternoon light roves  
Gilding her hair (wooden nutmegs and cloves),

And the gardener plants his seedsman’s samples  
Where no wild unicorn herd tramples—

In clouds like potting-sheds he pots  
The budding planets in leaves cool as grots,

For the great Queen Claude when the light’s gilded  
gaud  
Sings Miserere, Gloria, Laud.

But when he passes the potting-shed,  
Fawning upon him comes the dead—

Each cupboard’s wooden skeleton  
Is a towel-horse when the clock strikes one,

And light is high—yet with ghosts it winces  
All night ’mid wrinkled tarnished quinces,

When the dark air seems soft down  
Of the wandering owl brown.

They know the clock-faced sun and moon  
Must wrinkle like the quinces soon

(That once in dark blue grass dew-dabbled  
Lay) . . . those ghosts like turkeys gabbled

To the scullion baking the Castle bread—  
“The Spirit, too, must be fed, be fed ;

Without our flesh we cannot see—  
Oh, give us back Stupidity ! ” . . .

But death had twisted their thin speech  
It could not fit the mind's small niche—

Upon the warm blue grass outside,  
They realized that they had died.

Only the light from their wooden curls roves  
Like the sweet smell of nutmegs and cloves

Buried deep in the potting-shed,  
Sighed those green geese, “Now the Queen is dead.

#### 24.—TWO KITCHEN SONGS

##### I

THE harsh bray and hollow  
Of the pot and the pan  
Seems Midas defying  
The great god Apollo !  
The leaves' great golden crowns  
Hang on the trees ;



The maids in their long gowns  
 Hunt me through these.  
 Grand'am, Grand'am,  
 From the pan I am  
 Flying . . . country gentlemen  
 Took flying Psyche for a hen  
 And aimed at her ; then turned a gun  
 On harmless chicken-me—for fun.  
 The beggars' dogs howl all together,  
 Their tails turn to a ragged feather ;  
 Pools, like mirrors hung in garrets,  
 Show each face as red as a parrot's,  
 Whistling hair that raises ire  
 In cocks and hens in the kitchen fire !  
 Every flame shrieks cockle-doo-doo  
 (With their cockscombs flaring high too) ;  
 The witch's rag-rug takes its flight  
 Beneath the willows' watery light :  
 The wells of water seem a-plume—  
 The old witch sweeps them with her broom—  
 All are chasing chicken-me. . . .  
 But Psyche—where, oh where, is she ?

## II

GREY as a guinea-fowl is the rain  
 Squawking down from the boughs again.

“ Anne, Anne,  
 Go fill the pail,”

Said the old witch who sat on the rail.  
 “ Though there is a hole in the bucket,  
 Anne, Anne,  
 It will fill my pocket ;

The water-drops when they cross my doors  
 Will turn to guineas and gold moidores. . . .”  
 The well-water hops across the floors ;  
 Whimpering, “ Anne ” it cries, implores,  
 And the guinea-fowl-plumaged rain,  
 Squawking down from the boughs again,  
 Cried, “ Anne, Anne, go fill the bucket,  
 There is a hole in the witch’s pocket—  
 And the water-drops like gold moidores,  
 Obedient girl, will surely be yours.  
 So, Anne, Anne,  
 Go fill the pail  
 Of the old witch who sits on the rail ! ”

#### 15.—SPINNING SONG

THE miller’s daughter  
 Combs her hair,  
 Like flocks of doves  
 As soft as vair . . .

Oh, how those soft flocks flutter down  
 Over the empty grassy town.

Like a queen in a crown  
 Of gold light, she  
 Sits ’neath the shadows’  
 Flickering tree—

Till the old dame went the way she came,  
 Playing bobcherry with a candle-flame.

Now Min the cat  
 With her white velvet gloves  
 Watches where sat  
 The mouse with her loves—

(Old and malicious Mrs. Grundy  
 Whose washing-day is from Monday to Monday.)

“Not a crumb,” said Min,  
 “To a mouse I’ll be giving,  
 For a mouse must spin  
 To earn her living.”

So poor Mrs. Mouse and her three cross Aunts  
 Nibble snow that rustles like gold wheat plants.

And the miller’s daughter  
 Combs her locks,  
 Like running water  
 Those dove-soft flocks ;

And her mouth is sweet as a honey-flower cold  
 But her heart is heavy as bags of gold.

The shadow-mice said  
 “We will line with down  
 From those doves, our bed  
 And our slippers and gown,

For everything comes to the shadows at last  
 If the spinning-wheel Time move slow or fast.”

## 26.—THE BEAR

WATER-GREEN is the flowing pollard  
 In Drowsytown ; a smocked dullard  
 Sits upon the noodle  
 Soft and milky grass,—  
 Clownish-white was that fopdoodle  
 As he watched the brown bear pass . . .  
 “ Who speaks of Alexander  
 And General Hercules,  
 And who speaks of Lysander ?  
 For I am strong as these !  
 The housekeeper’s old rug  
 Is shabby brown as me,  
 And if I wished to hug  
 Those heroes, they would flee,—  
 For always when I show affection  
 They take the contrary direction.  
 I passed the barrack square  
 In nodding Drowsytown,—  
 Where four-and-twenty soldiers stare  
 Through slits of windows at the Bear,”  
 (So he told the Clown.)  
 “ Twelve were black as Night the Zambo,  
 (Black shades playing at dumb crambo !)  
 Twelve were gilded as the light,  
 Goggling negro eyes of fright.  
 There they stood and each mentero,  
 Striped and pointed, leaned to Zero . . .  
 Grumbling footsteps of the Bear  
 Came near . . . they did fade in air,  
 o

The window shut and they were gone  
 The Brown Bear lumbered on alone.”  
 So he told the smocked fopdoodle,  
 White and flapping as the air,  
 Sprawling on the grass for pillow—  
 (Milky soft as any noodle)  
 ’Neath the water-green willow  
 There in Drowsytown  
 Where one crumpled cottage nods—  
 Nodding

Nodding

Down.

## 27.—WHY

NOAH’S granddaughter  
 Sat on his knee ;  
 Her questions like water  
 Gushed ceaselessly.

Her hair’s gilded wool  
 Seems the sun’s tent ;  
 Her mouth, a grape golden-cool,  
 Shows through the rent.

Noah’s replies  
 Are all one hears ;  
 And the small ripples rise  
 Like listening ass-ears.

“ That young giraffe ?  
 His proud elevation  
 Raises a laugh  
 To the height of quotation. . . .

The camel's face  
Is like Mrs. Grundy's ;  
He makes that grimace  
At working on Sundays.

The kangaroo, chaste,  
Of Victorian complexion,  
Wears at her waist  
Each pledge of affection.

The trunk of the elephant  
Is not a box,  
The cock's gilded crown can't  
Frighten the fox."

. . . . .  
The sea-gods talk Greek . . .  
But they learn the word " why " ;  
Like leaves of the palm,  
Their beards, gilded and dry

Are spreading upon  
The blue marble Pompeii  
Whose temples are gone  
(So the sea seems) ; Aglae

Asks " What for ? " . . . The waves' door  
Begins to slam.  
Like water the questions pour.  
Noah said " Damn ! "

## 28.—THE TOILETTE OF MYRRHINE

SIESTA time is hot in Hell !  
 Down the glittering shutters fell,  
 With a noise Arabian  
 Like the rustling pearls that fan  
 The eyes of rajahs when they hide  
 Beyond the incense-flowing tide  
 Their majesty, all lonely save  
 For the hot Nubian sun, their slave.

And like the lovely light gazelles  
 Walking by deep water-wells,  
 Shadows past her mirrors fleet  
 Through bright trellises of heat.

Through the shutters fawning crept  
 A barber zephyr, cringing stept  
 Through the shutters fallen like water—  
 Hiding Hell's most lovely daughter.

The sun, a ripened apricot,  
 Still made the flattened roof-tops hot,  
 And at her table preened and set  
 Myrrhine sits at her toilette.

“ Madame Myrrhine, if you please,”  
 Fawning said the barber breeze,  
 “ I will coiff as light as air  
 That Arabian wind your hair.”

Never had the perfumed seas  
 Such bright grape-black curls as these,  
 Fallen like rustling pearls that run,  
 Burnt by the hot Nubian sun,

From each elephantine trunk  
 The waterfalls rear. Myrrhine shrunk,  
 But now the barber zephyr curls  
 Black cornucopias of pearls.

Upon the dressing-table, heat  
 Is flaunting like a parokeet,  
 And in the street, dust-white and lean,  
 Two black apes bear her palanquin.

Through the shutters see those apes'  
 Eyes like green and golden grapes . . .  
 Their falsetto voices made  
 A false simian serenade.

The negress Dinah, through unheard  
 Shutters like the sun's gold gourd,  
 Bears her powder-puff—the breath  
 Of an angel, a swan's death.

Never once Myrrhine replies  
 To those apes with slanting eyes . . .  
 She died a thousand years ago—  
 From dust her beauty ripened slow.

But Fanfreluche her parrot closes  
 With the ballerina roses—  
 Pecks them—Dinah longs to snatch  
 The night to make her beauty-patch.

## 29.—EN FAMILLE

IN early spring-time, after their tea,  
 Through the young fields of the springing Bohea,



Jemima, Jocasta, Dinah, and Deb  
 Walked with their father Sir Joshua Jebb—  
 An admiral red, whose only notion,  
 (A butterfly poised on a pigtailed ocean)  
 Is of the peruked sea whose swell  
 Breaks on the flowerless rocks of Hell.  
 Under the thin trees, Deb and Dinah,  
 Jemima, Jocasta, walked, and finer  
 Their black hair seemed (flat-sleek to see)  
 Than the young leaves of the springing Bohea ;  
 Their cheeks were like nutmeg-flowers when swells  
 The rain into foolish silver bells.  
 They said, “ If the door you would only slam,  
 Or if, Papa, you would once say ‘ Damn ’—  
 Instead of merely roaring ‘ Avast ’  
 Or boldly invoking the nautical Blast—  
 We should now stand in the street of Hell  
 Watching siesta shutters that fell  
 With a noise like amber softly sliding ;  
 Our moon-like glances through these gliding  
 Would see at her table preened and set  
 Myrrhina sitting at her toilette  
 With eyelids closed as soft as the breeze  
 That flows from gold flowers on the incense-trees.”

. . . . .

The Admiral said, “ You could never call—  
 I assure you it would not do at all !  
 She gets down from table without saying ‘ Please,’  
 Forgets her prayers and to cross her T’s,  
 In short, her scandalous reputation  
 Has shocked the whole of the Hellish nation ;

And every turbaned Chinoiserie,  
 With whom we should sip our black Bohea,  
 Would stretch out her simian fingers thin  
 To scratch you, my dears, like a mandoline ;  
 For Hell is just as properly proper  
 As Greenwich, or as Bath, or Joppa ! ”

### 30.—TWO PROMENADES SENTIMENTALES

#### I *Rain*

BESIDE the smooth black lacquer sea  
 You and I move aimlessly.

The grass is springing pale, alone,  
 Tuneless as a quartertone. . . .

Remote your face seems, far away  
 Beneath the ghostly water, Day,

That laps across you, rustling loud—  
 Until you seem a muslined cloud

Beneath your fluted hat's ghost-flowers—  
 The little dog that runs and cowers

Black as Beelzebub, now tries  
 To catch the white lace butterflies. . . .

But we are mute and move again  
 Across the wide and endless plain,

Vague as the little nachreous breeze  
 That plays with gilt rococo seas.

We are two ghosts to-day—each ghost  
For ever wandering and lost ;

No yesterday and no to-morrow  
Know we—neither joy nor sorrow,

For this is the hour when like a swan  
The silence floats, so still and wan,

That bird-songs, silver masks to hide  
Strange faces, now all sounds have died,

Find but one curdled sheepskin flower  
Embodied in this ghostly hour. . . .

## II (*The Professor speaks*)

ONE time when the cold red winter sun  
Like a Punch and Judy show shrilled in fun

And scattered down its green perfume  
Like the dust that drifts from the green lime-bloom,

I sat at my dressing-table—that chilly  
Palely crinolined water-lily

And watched my face as spined and brittle  
As the tall fish, tangled in a little

Dark weed, that sea-captains keep  
In bottles and perpetual sleep.

My face seemed the King of Spain's dry map  
All seamed with gold . . . no one cared a rap

As I walked on the grass, like the sheepish buds  
Of wool that grow on lambs chewing their cuds.

The small flowers grew to a hairy husk  
That holds Eternity for its musk

And the satyr's daughter came : I saw  
She was golden as Venus' castle of straw,

And the curls round her golden fruit-face shine  
Like black ivy-berries that will not make wine.

With my black cloak—(a three-tiered ship on the  
main)

And my face like the map of the King of Spain,

Beneath the boughs where like ragged goose-plumes  
Of the snow hang the spring's first chilly blooms,

I swept on towards her ; my foot with the gout  
Clattered like satyr-hoofs, put her to rout,

For she thought that I was the satyr-king . . .  
So she fled like the goat-legged wind of spring

Across the sea that was green as grass,  
Where bird-soft archipelagos pass—

To where like golden bouquets lay  
Asia, Africa, and Cathay.

And now the bird-soft light and shade  
Touches me not ; I promenade

Where rain falls with tinkling notes, and cold,  
Like the castanet-sound of the thinnest gold

In chessboard gardens where, knight and pawn  
Of ivory, scentless flowers are born.

### 31.—WINTER

#### TO VERONICA

DAGOBERT lay in front of the fire . . .  
Each thin flame seemed a feathery spire

Of the grasses that like goslings quack  
On the castle walls : “ Bring Gargotte back ” ;

But Gargotte the goose-girl, bright as hail,  
Has faded into a fairy-tale.

The kings and queens on the nursery wall  
Seem chain-armoured fish in the moat, and all

The frost-flowers upon the window-panes,  
Grown fertile from the fire’s gold grains,

Ripen to gold-freckled strawberries,  
Raspberries, glassy-pale gooseberries—

(We never could touch them, early or late,  
They would chill our hands like the touch of Fate.)

But Anne was five years old and must know  
Reality ; in the goose-soft snow

She was made to walk with her three tall aunts  
Drooping beneath the snow’s cold plants.

They dread the hour when with book and bell  
 Their mother, the old fell Countess of L——

Is disrobed of her wig and embalmed for the night's  
 Sweet mummified dark ; her invective affrights

The maids till you hear them scamper like mice  
 In the wainscoting—trembling, neat and nice.

Each clustered bouquet of the snows is  
 Like stephanotis and white roses ;

The muted airs sing Palestrina  
 In trees like monstresses, grown leaner

Than she is ; the unripe snow falls  
 Like little tunes on the virginals

Whose sound is bright, unripe and sour  
 As small fruits fall'n before their hour.

The Countess sits and plays fantan  
 Beneath the portrait of great Queen Anne

(Who sleeps beneath the strawberry bed) ;  
 And all her maids have scampered, fled.

The shuffled cards like the tail of a bird  
 Unfolding its shining plumes-are heard. . . .

The maid in her powder-closet soon  
 Beneath the fire of the calm full moon

Whose sparkles, rubies, sapphires, spill  
 For her upon the window-sill

Will nod her head, grown sleepy, I wis,  
As Alaciel, or Semiramis,

Pasiphae, or the lady Isis,  
Embalmed in the precious airs like spices.

But her ladyship stamps with her stick . . . “Grown  
cold

Are my small feet, from my chilly gold—

Unwarmed by buds of the lamb’s wool . . . go  
And gather for me the soft polar snow

To line with that silver chilly-sweet  
The little slippers upon my feet—

With snow clear-petalled as lemon blossom—  
Crystal-clear—perfumed as Venus’ bosom.”

. . . . .

Can this be Eternity?—snow peach-cold,  
Sleeping and rising and growing old,

While she lies embalmed in the fire’s gold sheen,  
Like a cross wasp in a ripe nectarine,

And the golden seed of the fire droops dead  
And ripens not in the heart or head!

### 32.—HERODIADE

TO INEZ CHANDOS-POLE

THE snow dies, that was cold as coral,  
Or a fairy-story’s moral,

And birds put forth their song's soft flowers  
In the thickets and the bowers.

Salome walks the lands . . . the quaint  
Flowers crisp as snow, and youthful, feint

To watch from Heaven's palaces,  
With footsteps soft as calices

The angels come as pages, show  
Salome how to touch the low

Lute-notes and dance the sarabande,  
Leading the Princess by the hand,

Until Salome's nurse appears,  
Harsh as the snow ; with shivering fears

The angels go again, discern  
Their's is no dance that she must learn.

### 33.—THE DOLL

IF cold grew visible again,  
We should see bell-flowers on the plain

With shivering stalks, as white as kings  
In trembling ermine. Each one rings

A little tune for vespers, matins,  
Beneath the polar sky's red satins ;

(The cold is but the shivering  
Of the white flower-bells as they ring.)



And Madame A . . . the elegante,  
With Madame X, the elephant,

Walked down the lengthy avenue  
Carrying their missals ; and they knew

The point-lace hanging from the trees  
Delicately laughed at these,

Knowing they'd find no angels there  
With their apple-curling hair

Because the angels pulled the lapel  
Of the priest's robe, left the chapel,

And with my doll and me in Heaven  
Hear the nursery clock strike seven.

The angels and myself, between us,  
We break their doll, the lady Venus,

Who's curls seem petalled orange-flowers  
From Heaven's tree (those perfumed showers

Fall like soft music in the mind).  
Seeing my doll they are unkind

To all their toys ; they break with joy  
The bird-soft bricks that builded Troy—

Laugh at the thought that it could matter.  
The angels' feet like bird-feet patter

Across the floor ; they leave their needle  
Sticking in their samplers, wheedle

Me to let them wash my daughter  
Until her face is clear as water,

Her curls like bell-flowers one can see  
At Easter, jangling on a tree.

. . . . .

But nurse is wandering on the plain,  
'Midst cold grown visible again ;

She looks for me, and as she walks  
On toes the cold has turned to stalks,

'Mid shrill steel grasses that dissemble  
The cold (bell-flowers that jangle, tremble,)

The angels nod their small heads, say  
"It's time we were in bed, stopped play" . . .

Yet still the angels overhead  
Play with my doll, though I'm in bed !

## SPLEEN

### 34.—PLATITUDES

THE news of Queen Anne's death comes to arouse  
The Dead, in the quilted red satin house

Where the country gentlemen from their birth  
Like kind red strawberries root in earth.

Then weeping come the dairy girls  
With their ivy curls and their cheeks like pearls ;

They leave the cheese and they leave the milk  
That Pan will steal—it is white as silk.

Peruked waves curl and break a splinter  
From the flat pearled shore of winter ;

And candle-flames bob like strawberries low  
Over the thick and the cream-like snow ;

While the dairy girls weep ; “ Who cares,” they said,  
“ If old and cross Queen Anne be dead ? ”

They wept, “ She lies in her palace chamber  
Embalmed in the cold, like a wasp in amber,

While a fawning courtier-like air roves  
In among the dark shadow-groves. . . .

And dead is our faun who loved the sheen  
Of the snow that is cold as a nectarine ! ”

### 35.—TWO NIGHT PIECES

#### I

THE shadows' saracenic hordes  
Overcome sweet firelight's lauds  
That still seem flowering as they pray  
To pictured kings that fade away.

The flickering firelight whispered "Hush!"  
 Flowering like a pale rose-bush,  
 To kings and queens in coats of mail  
 Melting like the first spring hail.  
 The cold night seems like wintry boughs,—  
 Calm as a nightingale's song grows  
 The old forgetful wind outside  
 That faded to a whisper, died.

. . . . .

Now shadows seem the wives, grown dim,  
 Of Algalath, Galgalath, Saraim,  
 Those negro kings . . . each nods her head  
 And walks through doors that lead to bed,  
 Nodding their dark heads adown.  
 Outside, leaves like a starry crown  
 Are clear as the splintered star ice-green  
 That is a crown for a negro queen.  
 Downstairs the household noises die,  
 The water seems a lullaby,  
 And soft snow sings among the leaves  
 Upon the boughs and castle eaves.

And only the fire's drowsy glow  
 Upon the soft bird-throats of snow  
 Made those feathers, bull-finch soft,  
 And rosy, singing from the loft.  
 And the shadows, negro queens, grown dim  
 Of Algalath, Galgalath, Saraim,  
 Nod their heads in the halcyon clime  
 Of age and wait for the clock's cold chime.

## II

THE cold hours pass.  
As blue as glass  
The beads of the frost  
On the boughs are lost,

And over the empty plain of snow  
King James' ghost is dragging slow.

The maids say " Ah ! "  
The maids say " Oh ! "  
Like tall fir-trees  
They stand in a row,

As tall as ghosts they glimmer bright  
Like the lily stars so tall and white.

But I am brave, like a fairy churn  
The milk in the dairy,—cream I turn

To butter pats like gold moidores . . .  
Outside in the snow, across the floors,

In at the window, came King James,  
Pointing at me his finger-flames . . .

" My bones are changed to cinnamon,  
Cold as stones, 'neath the wintry moon,

For cold is the gold-kernelled berry  
On the sweet cornelian cherry

Tree " . . . then over the plain of snow  
No sight of the King, or high or low !

Only the blue glass beads of the frost,  
In the furry boughs where King James is lost,

And the maids that fall  
Down in a swoon,  
One by one  
'Neath the wintry moon !

### 36.—FANTOCHES

THE stars were like prunes . . .  
Wrinkled, the winter breeze.  
In nightgowns buffoons  
Wrote dusty lampoons.  
“ Where is Sir Plato  
And where is Queen Anne ?  
Forgotten like Cato !  
Less than a man  
Is now that disaster,  
The mage Zoroaster  
Who could not survive our runes, our lampoons,  
Withered as stars that are darker than prunes ! ”  
. . . Blown along in her palanquin,  
Tattered and thin,  
In her quilted red satin,  
Miss Pekoe reads Latin.  
Like sequins  
From Pekin's  
Treasuries these  
Eyes of Miss Pekoe ;  
Illogicalisms  
Her limbs, and an echo

Her face ; syllogisms  
 Her hat. Astronomical  
 Trees where swoons  
 The breeze, hide coxcombical  
 Lanthorn moons  
 Set in the trees  
 Like bird-lime.  
 The third time,  
 An old buffoon croons  
 To a fluttering moth :  
 "Dust is the cloth  
 That made Cleopatra,  
 And every peninsular  
 House ; dark Sumatra,  
 Miss Pekoe grown insular,  
 The saturnine asinine bray of the seas ! "

### 37.—BY THE LAKE

ACROSS the thick and the pastel snow  
 Two people go. . . . "And do you remember  
 When last we wandered this shore ? " . . . "Ah no!  
 For it is cold-hearted December."  
 "Dead, the leaves that like asses' ears hung on the  
     trees  
 When last we wandered and squandered joy here ;  
 Now Midas your husband will listen for these  
 Whispers—these tears for joy's bier."  
 And as they walk, they seem tall pagodas ;  
 And all the ropes let down from the cloud  
 Ring the hard cold bell-buds upon the trees—codas  
 Of overtones, ecstasies, grown for love's shroud.

## 38.—LADY IMMORALINE

## TO THE MEMORY OF ROBERT ROSS

FROM the great house platformed flat as a cage  
 Above the clouds' widened landing-stage,  
 We watch the carriages driving home  
 By the goggling and gilded dragons of foam.

“Beautiful carriages from Champs Elysée  
 Filled with fair maidens on cushions easy”\*  
 Drive by the gilt Second Empire sand  
 Where leaves of black gauze enliven the band.

“Do you remember  
 Semiramis,  
 Bright as September? . . .  
 Gone is her kiss. . . .”

Said Lady Immoraline . . . old is she  
 As a mummy. She sipped her black Bohea  
 With Sir Robert Walpole, the Emperor Nero,  
 And that old general, Cæsar the hero.

The lovely lotus buds of the snow  
 Bloom into brightness, fading slow :  
 And now she drives, all shrunken and old  
 By the sea and the sands' Second Empire gold,

Where the spray seems like wheat-ears,  
 And Ethiopia's  
 Fruits—cornucopias  
 For beauty's bier.

\* These two lines, by Georgina Farrer, were quoted by Mr. Ross as specimens of the worst poetry ever written.



# ELEGY ON DEAD FASHION

TO THOMAS BALSTON

QUEEN VENUS' old historians seem like bees  
That suck their honey from the thick lime-trees;  
Behind their honeyed lattices all day,  
As murmurous as thick-leaved lime-trees, they  
Dream cells of Time away in murmuring o'er  
The talk of little people gone before,  
Within their palaces until gold eves  
Bring them to windows in the tree-tops' leaves.

Manteaux espagnoles by the water's sheen,  
Where trees resemble a great pelerine,  
Are spread about the groups upon the lawns  
Smooth as an almond's husk, or coat of fawns.

And cavaliers and ladies on the grass  
Watch Chloe and young Damon as they pass,—  
The shepherdess that runs from her swain's kiss,  
Through leafy nets in a gown à l'Amadis

That rustles like the trembling evening,  
Which falling on the lawns and brakes will bring  
Roucoulement of doves, and veiled belles  
Preening their cloaks of cashmere tourterelles.

Oh, voices speaking by the waterfall !  
Heroic statues cast a shadow tall,  
And rustic faces where long water runs  
Are now transformed to gold five-petalled suns.

But the historians murmur still like bees :  
 “ How old is Venus ? older than the trees,  
 Does she remember still the ancient bliss,  
 Grown dead and rotten, of Adonis’ kiss ? ”

Through mulberry trees a candle’s thick gold thread—,  
 So seems the summer sun to the sad Dead ;  
 That cackling candle’s loud cacophonies  
 Will wake not Plato, Aristophanes,

For all their wisdom. There in the deep groves  
 They must forget Olympus and their loves,  
 Lying beneath the coldest flower we see  
 On the young green-blooming strawberry.

The nymphs are dead like the great summer roses,  
 Only an Abyssinian wind dozes ;  
 Cloyed with late honey are his dark wings’ sheens,  
 Yet, once on these lone crags, nymphs bright as queens

Walked with elegant footsteps through light leaves,  
 Where only elegiac air now grieves,—  
 For the light leaves are sere and whisper dead  
 Echoes of elegances lost and fled.

Queen Thetis wore pelisses of tissue  
 Of marine blue or violet, or deep blue,  
 Beside the softest flower-bells of the seas.  
 In winter, under thick swan-bosomed trees

The colours most in favour were marine,  
 Blue Louise, gris bois, grenate, myrtle green ;  
 Beside the ermine bells of the lorn foam—  
 Those shivering flower-bells—nymphs light-footed  
 roam

No more, nor walk within vast, bear-furred woods  
 Where cross owls mocked them from their leafy  
     hoods,  
 And once, the ermine leaves of the cold snow  
 Seemed fashion leaves of eighty years ago.—

When first as thin as young Prince Jamie's plaid  
 The tartan leaves upon the branches laid  
 Showed feathered flowers as brown as any gannet,  
 And thin as January or as Janet,—

Chione, Cleopatra, Boreas' daughters  
 Walked beside the stream's drake-plumaged waters  
 In crinolines of plaided sarsenet,  
 Scotch caps, where those drake-curling waters wet

Their elegant insteps.—Household nymphs must  
     wear  
 For humble tasks the ponceau gros d'hiver,—  
 ('Tisiphone the Fury, like a dire  
 Wind raising up Balmoral towers of fire).

Another wind's small drum through thin leaves taps,  
 And Venus' children wearing their Scotch caps  
 Or a small toque Hongroise that is round-brimmed,  
 And with a wing from Venus' pigeons trimmed,

Run now with hoops and dolls they call "cher  
     cœur,"  
 Chase Cupid in his jacket artilleur,  
 Play on the cliffs where like the goats' thick locks  
 The coarse grass grows, and clamber on the rocks.

Above the forest, whence he shot the does,  
 Was Jupiter's vast shooting-box of snows—  
 His blunderbuss's ancient repercussions  
 Fired but pears and apples, furred as Russians.

He threw his gun down and began to curse,  
 When up ran Venus' children with their nurse :  
 "See, Grandpapa, rocks like Balmoral's towers  
 Held still these brown and gannet-plumaged flowers."

Then underneath the hairy and the bestial  
 Skies of winter ripening, a celestial  
 Bucolic comedy of subtle meaning  
 Grew with rough summer suns, until with preening

Of soft bird-breasted leaves, again we knew  
 The secret of how hell and heaven grew.  
 Where walked great Jupiter, and like a peasant  
 Shot the partridge, grouse, and hare, and pheasant,

In the gods' country park there was a farm  
 Where all the gentle beasts came to no harm,  
 Left to run wild. And there in that great wood  
 Was Juno's dairy, cold as any bud,

With milk and cream, as sweet and thick as yellow  
 Apricots and melons, in the mellow  
 Noon when dairy maids must bear it through  
 Lanes full of trilling flowers and budding dew.

And then beside the swanskin pool where pansies  
 And strawberries and other pretty fancies  
 With the wild cherries sing their madrigals,  
 The goddesses walked by the waterfalls ;

But now beside the water's thin flower-bells  
 No bustles seem rose castles and tourelles  
 Beside the little lake that seems of thin  
 And plumeless and too delicate swanskin ;

Nor sparks and rays from calèche wheels that roll  
 Mirror the haycocks with gilt rays like Sol  
 Where trees seemed icebergs,—rose and green  
       reflections  
 Of the passing nymphs and their confections.—

In summer, when nymph Echo was serene  
 On these lone crags walked many a beauteous queen  
 As lovely as the light and spangled breeze  
 Beside the caves and myrtle groves and trees.

One wood-nymph wore a deep black velvet bonnet  
 With blackest ivy leaves for wreaths upon it,—  
 Shading her face as lovely as the fountains  
 While she descended from deep-wooded mountains

And with the wood-gods hiding, Charlottine,  
 Boreas' daughter, wore a crinoline.  
 So fair with water-flowing hair was she,  
 That crinoline would shine from crag and tree.

When the gold spangles on the water seen  
 Were like the twanging of a mandoline,  
 And all the ripples were like ripest fruits  
 That grow from the deep water's twisted roots,

The water-nymph, dark Mademoiselle Persane,  
 On blond sands wore an Algerine turbane ;

Of blue velours d'Afrique was the pelisse  
Of Grisi the ondine, and like the fleece

Of water gods, or gold trees on the strand,  
Her gold hair fell like fountains on the sand,—  
The thick gold sand beside the siren waves,—  
Like honey-cells those sands and fountain caves.

Dream of the picnics where trees, sylvan, wan,  
Shaded our feasts of nightingale and swan,  
With wines as plumed as birds of paradise,  
Or Persian winds, to drown the time that flies !

Then, on the shaven ice-green grass one sees  
Roses and cherries and ripe strawberries  
Bobbing at our lips like scarlet fire  
Between the meshes of the light's gold wire,

And the bacchantes with their dew-wet hair,  
Like velvety dark leaves of vineyards, wear  
Great bunchèd tufts of African red coral  
Whose glints with sheen of dew and leaves now  
quarrel.

Here in a sheep-thick shade of tree and root  
Nymphs nurse each fawn whose pretty golden foot  
Skipped there. They, milk of flaxen lilies, sip  
From a sweet cup that has a coral lip,

In that green darkness. Melons dark as caves  
Held thick gold honey for their fountain waves,  
And there were gourds as wrinkled dark as Pan,  
Or old Silenus,—figs whence jewels ran.

There in the forest, through the green baize leaves,  
 Walked Artemis, and like the bound-up sheaves  
 Of gilt and rustling-tressèd corn, her arrows  
 Through greenhouses of vegetable marrows

She aimed ; like the vast serres-chaudes of the lake,  
 Those greenhouses, her arrows then did break !  
 Her dress was trimmed with straw, her hair streamed  
     bright  
 And glittering as topaz, chrysolite.

Among their castles of gold straw entwined  
 With blackest ivy buds and leaves, and lined  
 With lambs' wool, and among the cocks of hay,  
 The satyrs danced the sheep-trot all the day

And sometimes stole a gherkin and a marrow,  
 Some strawberries, and a cucumber narrow,  
 Where the straw-coloured harsh leaves hid the root,  
 And only showed the scarlet glistening fruit.

In wooded gardens where the green baize leaves  
 Hid fruit that rustled like Ceres' gilt sheaves  
 They danced the galloppade and the mazurka,  
 Cracoviak, cachucha, and the turka,

With Fauna and the country deities,  
 Pan's love Eupheme, and the Hyades,—  
 Phaola and Ambrosia and Eudora,  
 Panōpe and Eupompe with great Flora,

Euryale, the Amazonian queen  
 Whose gown is looped above the yellow sheen

Of her bright yellow petticoat,—the breeze  
 Strewed wild flowers on her straw hat through the  
 trees ;

And country nymphs with round straw hats deep-  
 brimmed,  
 And at one side with pheasants' feathers trimmed,—  
 With gowns of green mohair and high kid boots  
 Wherewith they trample radish, strawberry, roots.

But far are we from forests of our rest  
 Where the wolf Nature from maternal breast  
 Fed us with strong brown milk . . . those epochs  
 gone,  
 Our eyeless statues weep from blinded stone.

And far are we from the innocence of man,  
 When Time's vast sculptures from rough dust began,  
 And natural law and moral were but one,—  
 Derived from the rich wisdom of the sun.

In those deep ages the most primitive  
 And roughest and uncouthest shapes did live  
 Knowing the memory of before their birth,  
 And their soul's life before this uncouth earth.

We could remember in that ancient time  
 Of our primeval innocence, a clime  
 Divined deep in the soul, in which the light  
 Of vaster suns gave wisdom to our sight ;

Now, days like wild beasts desecrate each part  
 Of that forgotten tomb that was our heart ;



There are more awful ruins hanging there  
Than those which hang and nod at empty air.

Yet still our soul keeps memories of that time  
In sylvan wildernesses,—our soul's prime  
Of wisdom, forests that were god's abode,  
And Saturn marching in the Dorian mode.

But all the nymphs are dead. The sound of fountains  
Weeps swan-soft elegies to the deep mountains,—  
Repeats their laughter, mournful now and slow,  
To the dead nymph Echo. Long ago

Among the pallid roses' spangled sheens  
On these lone crags nymphs that were bright as  
queens

Walked with elegant footsteps through light leaves  
Where now a dark-winged southern wind soft grieves,

So cloyed with honey he must close his wing.  
No ondine Grisi now may rise to sing,  
For the light leaves are sere and whisper dead  
Echoes of elegances lost and fled.

The nymphs are dead. And yet when spring begins  
The nation of the Dead must feel old sins  
Wake unremembering bones, eternal, old  
As Death. Oh, think how these must feel the cold

In the deep groves ! But here these dead still walk  
As though they lived, and sigh awhile, and talk.  
O perfumed nosegay brought for noseless Death !  
This brightest myrrh can not perfume that breath.

The nymphs are dead,—Syrinx and Dryope  
 And that smooth nymph that changed into a tree.  
 But though the shade, that Ethiopia, sees  
 Their beauty make more bright its treasures,

Their amber blood in porphyry veins still grows  
 Deep in the dark secret of the rose,  
 Though dust are their bright temples in the heat,  
 The nymph Parthenope with golden feet.

My glittering fire has turned into a ghost,  
 My rose is now cold amber and is lost ;  
 Yet from that fire you still could light the sun,  
 And from that amber, bee-winged motes could  
     come ;

Though grown from rocks and trees, dark as Saint  
     Anne,  
 The little nun-like leaves weep our small span,  
 And eyeless statues in the garden weep  
 For Niobe who by the founts doth sleep,

In gardens of a fairy aristocracy  
 That lead downhill to mountain peaks of sea,  
 Where people build like beavers on the sand  
 Among life's common movements, understand

That Troy and Babylon were built with bricks ;  
 They engineer great wells into the Styx  
 And build hotels upon the peaks of seas  
 Where the small trivial Dead can sit and freeze.

Still ancient fanfares sound from mountain gorges  
 Where once Prometheus lit enormous forges :

“Debout les morts !” No key when the heart  
closes :

The nymphs are dead like the great summer roses.

But Janet, the old wood-god Janus’ daughter,  
All January-thin and blond as water,  
Runs through the gardens, sees Europa ride  
Down to the great Swiss mountains of the tide,

Though in the deep woods, budding violets  
And strawberries as round as triolets  
Beneath their swanskin leaves feel all alone. . . .  
The golden feet that crushed them now are gone.

Beside the Alps of sea, each crinoline  
Of muslin and of gauze and grenadine  
Sweeps by the Mendelssohnian waterfall,  
O’er beaver-smooth grass, by the castle wall,

Beside the thick mosaic of the leaves.  
Left by the glamour of some huger eyes  
The thick gold spangles on those leaves are seen  
Like the sharp twanging of a mandoline ;

And there, with Fortune, I too sit apart  
Feeling the jewel turn flower, the flower turn heart,  
Knowing not goddess’s from beggar’s bones,  
Nor all death’s gulf between those semitones.

We who were proud and various as the wave,—  
What strange companions the unreasoning grave  
Will give us . . . wintry Prudence’s empty skull  
May lie near that of Venus the dead trull !

There are great diamonds hidden in the mud  
 Waiting Prometheus' fire and Time's vast flood,  
 Wild glistening flowers that spring from these could  
     know

The secret of how hell and heaven grow.

But at a wayside station near the rock  
 Where vast Prometheus lies, another bock  
 Is brought by Ganymede . . . why dream the Flood  
 Would save those diamonds hidden in the mud ?

The farmer on his donkey now rides down  
 The mountain side with angels' eggs the town  
 Will buy, beside the mountain peaks of sea  
 And gardens of the fairy aristocracy,

And ladies in their carriages drive down  
 The mountain to the gardens of the town,  
 And the hot wind, that little Savoyard,  
 Decked them with wild flowers à la montagnard.

The wood-nymphs Nettie, Alexandrine, tear  
 Balmoral gowns made for this mountain wear,—  
 White veils ; each Fauchon-emigré bonnet  
 Bears coronets of berries wild upon it ;

Huge as the great gold sun, each parasol  
 That hides it ; fluid zephyrs now extol  
 Antiope's short bell-shaped pelerine  
 Worn lest gauze ribbons of the rain be seen.

“ Oh the blond hair of Fortune in the grove !  
 Lean from your carriage, hold her lest she rove.”

“ Her face is winter, wrinkled, peaceless, mired,  
Black as the cave where Cerberus was sired.—

O soul, my Lazarus ! There was a clime  
Deep in your tomb of flesh, defying time,  
When a god’s soul played there, began to dance  
Deep in that tomb with divine, deathless Chance.

But that huge god grew wearied of our game  
And all the lion-like waterfalls grew tame.  
Venus, a statue mouldering on the wall,  
Noseless and broken now, forgetting all

The fanfares, knows that Phœbus gilds her still  
On pastoral afternoons ; but she is chill.  
Venus, you too have known the anguished cold,  
The crumbling years, the fear of growing old !

Here in this theatre of redistributions,  
This old arena built for retributions,  
We rose imperial from primeval slime  
Through architecture of our bones by Time ;

Now night like lava flows without a chart  
From unremembering craters of the heart,  
Anguished with their dead fires.—Beneath the caves  
And crags the Numidean sibyl raves ;

We hear the sibyl crying Prophecy.  
‘ There where the kiss seems immortality  
I prophesy the Worm . . . there, in the kiss,  
He’ll find his most imperial luxuries.’ ”

Where mountains, millers' dusty bags, seem full  
 Of Priam's gold, and all the black sheep's wool  
 Of thunderstorms, and grass in forests floats  
 As green as Tyrolean peasants' petticoats,

Dead Venus drove in her barouche, her shawl  
 As mauve as mountain distance covering all,  
 As she swept o'er the plain with her postillions  
 That were black and haughty as Castillians.

There, high above the thickest forests were  
 The steepest high-walled castles of the air ;  
 And paths led to those castles that were bordered  
 With great gardens, neat and walled and ordered

With rivers, feathered masks, and pots of peas  
 Mournful beneath the vast and castled trees,  
 Where gardeners clip the strange wind's glittering  
 fleece.

Oh, how that wind can blow through a pelisse !

Miss Ellen and Miss Harriet, the ondines,  
 Bore baskets full of velvet nectarines  
 And walnuts, over wooden trellissed bridges  
 That cross the streams and the steep mountain ridges.

They wore straw-coloured crinolines of faille  
 Beneath their shady bonnets made of paille,—  
 Their melancholy laughter ever sounds  
 Through castled trees and over castle grounds.

But I am sad, and by the wrinkled lake,  
 Where the great mauve flowers will never wake,  
 But drip with sleep and dew, I read this thin,  
 Dry, withered book of delicate swanskin,

And find a tale of an Olympian glade  
 Where Psyche has become a kitchenmaid ;  
 The world, that pitiful old catchpenny,  
 Whines at her booth for pence, and finds too many,  
 Showing the gods no larger than ourselves,  
 And twittering bird-like from the rocky shelves  
 Of this Olympus, and no prophecy  
 They roar, but whisper triviality.

The ancient castle wall of Chaos nods.  
 Through gaps of ruined air and withered pods  
 A showman came ; he smiles like Time and mocks  
 Me, takes his marionettes from their small box,—

The gods, Time-crumbled into marionettes.  
 Death frays their ageless bodies, hunger frets  
 Them, till at last, like us, they dance  
 Upon the old dull string pulled now by Chance.

This is the game the apeish shuddering dust  
 Plays for the market and the house of lust ;  
 There are a thousand deaths the spirit dies  
 Unknown to the sad Dead that we despise.

Still ladies in their carriages drive down  
 The mountain to the gardens of the town,  
 And the hot wind, that little Savoyard,  
 Decked them with wild flowers à la montagnard.

Rich as a tomb each dress ! oh, pity these !  
 I think the rich died young, and no one sees  
 The young loved face show for a fading while  
 Through that death-mask, the sad and cynic smile.

These living skeletons blown by the wind  
 Were Cleopatra, Thais . . . age unkind  
 Has shrunk them so feeble and so small  
 That Death will never comfort them at all.

They are so poor they seem to have put by  
 The outworn fashion of the flesh ! They lie  
 Naked and bare in their mortality  
 Waiting for Death to warm them, childishly.

Do these Dead, shivering in their raggedness  
 Of outworn flesh, know us more dead, and guess  
 How day rolls down, that vast eternal stone,  
 Shuts each in his accustomed grave, alone ?

Round the eternal skeleton their dress  
 Is rags, our mountain-high forgetfulness  
 Through centuries is piled above the Dead,  
 Waiting in vain for some remembered tread

Upon this rock-bound march that all we made  
 To the eternal empire of the shade,—  
 To the small sound of Time's drum in the heart.  
 The sound they wait for dies, the steps depart.

Come not, O solemn and revengeful Dead,—  
 Most loving Dead, from your eternal bed  
 To meet this living ghost, lest you should keep  
 Some memory of what I was, and weep.



## GOLD COAST CUSTOMS \*

TO HELEN ROTHAM

In Ashantee, a hundred years ago, the death of any rich or important person was followed by several days of national ceremonies, during which the utmost licence prevailed, and slaves and poor persons were killed that the bones of the deceased might be laved with human blood. These ceremonies were called Customs.

ONE fantee wave  
Is grave and tall  
As brave Ashantee's  
Thick mud wall.  
Munza\* rattles his bones in the dust,  
Lurking in murk because he must.

Striped black and white  
Is the squealing light ;  
The dust brays white in the market place,  
Dead powder spread on a black skull's face.

Like monkey skin  
Is the sea—one sin  
Like a weasel is nailed to bleach on the rocks  
Where the eyeless mud screeched fawning, mocks

At a negro that wipes  
His knife . . . dug there  
A bugbear bellowing  
Bone dared rear—  
A bugbear bone that bellows white  
As the ventriloquist sound of light,

It rears at his head-dress of felted black hair  
 The one humanity clinging there—  
 His eyeless face whitened like black and white bones  
 And his beard of rusty  
 Brown grass cones.

Hard blue and white  
 Courie shells (the light  
 Grown hard) outline  
 The leopardskin musty  
 Leaves that shine  
 With an animal smell both thick and fusty.

One house like a ratskin  
 Mask flaps fleet  
 In the sailor's tall  
 Ventriloquist street  
 Where the rag houses flap—  
 Hiding a gap.

Here, tier on tier,  
 Like a black box rear  
 In the flapping slum  
 Beside Death's docks.  
 I did not know this meaner Death  
 Meant this : that the bunches of nerves still dance  
 And caper among these slums, and prance.

“Mariners, put your bones to bed !”  
 But at Lady Bambergher's parties each head,  
 Grinning, knew it had left its bones  
 In the mud with the white skulls . . . only the grin  
 Is left, strings of nerves, and the drum-taut skin.

When the sun in the empty  
 Sky is high  
 In his dirty brown and white  
 Birdskin dress—  
 He hangs like a skull  
 With a yellow dull  
 Face made of clay  
 (Where tainted, painted, the plague-spots bray)  
 To hide where the real face rotted away.

So our wormskin and paper masks still keep,  
 Above the rotting bones they hide,  
 The marks of the Plague whereof we died :  
 The belief,  
 The grief,  
 The love,  
 Or the grin  
 Of the shapeless worm-soft unshaping Sin—  
 Unshaping till no more the beat of the blood  
 Can raise up the body from endless mud  
 Though the hell-fires cold  
 As the worm, and old,  
 Are painted upon each unshaped form—  
 No more man, woman, or beast to see—  
 But the universal, devouring Worm.

When the sun of dawn looks down on the shrunken  
 Heads, drums of skin, and the dead men drunken,  
 I only know one half of my heart  
 Lies in that terrible coffin of stone,  
 My body that stalks through the slum alone.

And that half of my heart  
 That is in your breast  
 You gave for meat  
 In the sailor's street  
 To the rat that had only my bones to eat.

But those hardened hearts  
 That roll and sprawl,  
 In a cowl of foul blind monkey-skin,  
 Lest the whips of the light crash roaring in—  
 Those hearts that roll  
 Down the phantom street  
 They have for their beat  
 The cannibal drums  
 And the cries of the slums,  
 And the Bamburgher parties—they have them all !

One high house flaps . . . taps  
 Light's skin drum—  
 Monkey-like shrunk  
 On all fours now come  
 The parties' sick ghosts, each hunting himself—  
 Black gaps beneath an ape's thick pelt,

Chasing a rat,  
 Their soul's ghost fat  
 Through the negro swamp,  
 Slum hovel's cramp,  
 Of Lady Bamburgher's parties above  
 With the latest grin, and the latest love,  
 And the latest game :  
 To show the shame

Of the rat-fat soul to the grinning day  
With even the ratskin flayed away.

Now, a thick cloud floating  
Low o'er the lake,  
Millions of flies  
Begin to awake,  
With the animation  
Of smart conversation :  
From Bedlam's madness the thick gadflies  
Seek for the broken statue's eyes.

Where the mud and the murk  
Whispering lurk :  
“ From me arises everything,  
The negro's louse  
The armadillo,  
Munza's bone and his peccadillo,”

Where flaps degraded  
The black and sated  
Slack macerated  
And antiquated  
Beckoning negress  
Nun of the shade,

And the rickety houses  
Rock and rot,  
Lady Bamburgher airs  
That foul plague-spot  
Her romantic heart.

From the cannibal mart,  
 That smart Plague-cart,  
 Lady Bamburgher rolls where the foul news-sheet  
 And the shambles for souls are set in the street.

And stuck in front  
 Of this world-tall Worm,  
 Stuck in front  
 Of this world's confession—  
 Like something rolled  
 Before a procession,  
 Is the face, a flimsy wormskin thing  
 That someone has raked  
 From the low plague-pit  
 As a figure-head  
 For Corruption dead,  
 And a mask for the universal Worm.

Her apeskin yellow  
 Tails of hair  
 Clung about her bone-white bare  
 Eyeless mask that cackled there :

The Worm's mask hid  
 Her eyeless mud,  
 Her shapeless love,  
 The plot to escape  
 From the God-ordained shape.

And her soul, the cannibal  
 Amazon's mart,  
 Where in squealing light  
 And clotted black night

On the monkey-skin black and white striped dust they  
 Cackle and bray  
 To the murdered day,

And the Amazon queen  
 With a bone-black face  
 Wears a mask with an apeskin beard ; she grinds  
 Her male child's bones in a mortar, binds  
 Him for food, and the people buy. For this

Hidden behind  
 The Worm's mask grown  
 White as a bone  
 Where eyeholes rot wide  
 And are painted for sight,  
 And the little mouth red as a dead Plague-spot  
 On that white mask painted to hide Death's rot,

For this painted Plague-cart's  
 Heart, for this  
 Slime of the Worm that paints her kiss  
 And the dead men's bones round her throat and wrist,  
 The half of my heart that lay in your breast  
 Has fallen away  
 To rot and bray  
 With the painted mud through the eyeless day.

The dust of all the dead can blow  
 Backwards and forwards, to and fro  
 To cover the half of my heart with death's rot,  
 Yet the dust of that other half comes not  
 To this coffin of stone that stalks through the slum

Though love to you now is the deaf Worm's lust  
 That, cloven in halves, will reunite  
 Foulness to deadness in the dust  
 And chaos of the enormous night.

How far is our innocent paradise,  
 The blue-striped sand,  
 Bull-bellowing band  
 Of waves, and the great gold suns made wise  
 By the dead days and the horizons grand.

Can a planet tease  
 With its great gold train,  
 Walking beside the pompous main—  
 That great gold planet the heat of the Sun  
 Where we saw black Shadow, a black man, run,  
 So a negress dare  
 Wear long gold hair?  
 The negress Dorothy one sees  
 Beside the caverns and the trees  
 Where her parasol  
 Throws a shadow tall  
 As a waterfall—  
 The negress Dorothy still feels  
 The great gold planet tease her brain.

And dreaming deep within her blood  
 Lay Africa like the dark in the wood;  
 For Africa is the unhistorical  
 Unremembering, unrhetorical  
 Undeveloped spirit involved



In the conditions of nature—Man,  
That black image of stone hath delved  
On the threshold where history began.

Now under the cannibal  
Sun is spread  
The black rhinoceros-hide of the mud  
For endlessness and timelessness . . . dead  
Grass creaks like a carrion-bird's voice, rattles,  
Squeaks like a wooden shuttle. Battles  
Have worn this deserted skeleton black  
As empty chain armour . . . lazily back  
With only the half of its heart it lies,  
With the giggling mud devouring its eyes,  
Naught left to fight  
But the black clotted night  
In its heart, and ventriloquist squealing light.

But lying beneath the giggling mud  
I thought there was something living, the bray  
Of the eyeless mud can not betray—  
Though it is buried beneath black bones  
Of the fetiches screeching like overtones  
Of the light, as they feel the slaves' spilt blood.

In tiers like a box  
Beside the docks  
The negro prays,  
The negro knocks.  
“Is anyone there?”  
His mumblings tear  
Nothing but paper walls, and the blare  
Of the gaping capering empty air.

The cannibal drums still roll in the mud  
 To the bones of the king's mother laved in blood  
 And the trophies with long black hair, shrunken heads  
 That drunken shrunk upon tumbled beds.

The negro rolls  
 His red eyeballs,  
 Prostrates himself.  
 The negro sprawls ;  
 His God is but a flat black stone  
 Upright upon a squeaking bone.

The negro's dull  
 Red eyeballs roll. . . .  
 The immortality of the soul  
 Is but black ghosts that squeak through the hole  
 That once seemed eyes in Munza's skull.

This is his god :  
 The cannibal sun  
 On bones that played  
 For evermore,  
 And the rusty roar  
 Of the ancient Dead,  
 And the squealing rat  
 The soul's ghost fat.

So Lady Bamburgher's Shrunken Head,  
 Slum hovel, is full of the rat-eaten bones  
 Of a fashionable god that lived not  
 Ever, but still has bones to rot :  
 A bloodless and an unborn thing

That cannot wake, yet cannot sleep,  
 That makes no sound, that cannot weep,  
 That hears all, bears all, cannot move—  
 It is buried so deep  
 Like a shameful thing  
 In that plague-spot heart, Death's last dust-heap.

. . . . .

A tall house flaps  
 In the canvas street,  
 Down in the wineshop  
 The Amazons meet

With the tall abbess  
 Of the shade . . .  
 A ghost in a gown  
 Like a stiff brigade

Watches the sailor  
 With a guitar  
 Lure the wind  
 From the islands far.

Oh far horizons and bright blue wine  
 And majesty of the seas that shine,  
 Bull-bellowing waves that ever fall  
 Round the god-like feet and the goddess tall !

A great yellow flower  
 With the silence shy  
 To the wind from the islands  
 Sighs "I die."

At the foot of the steps  
 Like the navy-blue ghost  
 Of a coiling negro,  
 In dock slums lost,

(The ghost, haunting steamers  
 And cocktail bars,  
 Card-sharpers, schemers  
 And Pullman cars)

A ripple rose  
 With mud at its root  
 And weeping kissed  
 A statue's foot.

In the sailor's tall  
 Ventriloquist street  
 The calico dummies  
 Flap and meet ;  
 Calculate : " Sally go  
 Pick up a sailor."  
 Behind that façade  
 The worm is a jailer.

" I cannot stiffen . . . I left my bones  
 Down in the street : no overtones  
 Of the murdered light can join my dust  
 To my black bones pressed in the House of Lust.  
 Only my feet still walk in the street ;  
 But where is my heart and its empty beat ?

Starved silly Sally, you dilly and dally,  
 The dummies said when I was a girl.  
 The rat deserts a room that is bare,  
 But Want, a cruel rat gnawing there

Ate to the heart, all else was gone,  
 Nothing remained but Want alone.  
 So now I'm a gay girl, a calico dummy,  
 With nothing left alive but my feet  
 That walk up and down in the Sailor's Street.

Behind the bawdy hovels like hoardings  
 Where harridans peer from a grovelling boarding  
 House, the lunatic  
 Wind still shakes  
 My empty rag-body, nothing wakes ;  
 The wind like a lunatic in a fouled  
 Nightgown, whipped those rags and howled.

Once I saw it come  
 Through the canvas slum,  
 Rattle and beat what seemed a drum,  
 Rattle and beat it with a bone.  
 O Christ, that bone was dead, alone.  
 Christ, Who will speak to such ragged Dead  
 As me, I am dead, alone and bare,  
 They expose me still to the grinning air,  
 I shall never gather my bones and my dust  
 Together (so changed and scattered, lost . . .)  
 So I can be decently buried.  
 What is that whimpering like a child  
 That this mad ghost beats like a drum in the air ?  
 The heart of Sal  
 That once was a girl  
 And now is a calico thing to loll  
 Over the easy steps of the slum  
 Waiting for something dead to come."

From Rotten Alley and Booble Street  
 The beggars crawl to starve near the meat  
 Of the reeling appalling cannibal mart  
 And Lady Bamburgher, smart Plague-cart.  
 Red rag face and a cough that tears  
 They creep through the mud of the docks from their  
     lairs ;

And when the dog-whining dawn light  
 Nosed for their hearts, whined in fright,  
 With a sly high animal  
 Whimpering, half-frightened call  
 To worlds outside our consciousness  
 It finds no heart within their dress.

The Rat has eaten  
 That and beaten  
 Hope and love and memory,  
 At last, and even the will to die.  
 But what is the loss ? For you cannot sell  
 The heart to those that have none for Hell  
 To fatten on . . . or that cheap machine,  
 And its beat would make springs for the dancing  
     feet

Of Lady Bamburgher down in the street,  
 Of her dogs that nose out each other's sin,  
 And grin, and whine, and roll therein.

Against the Sea-wall are painted signs  
 " Here for a shilling a sailor dines."  
 Each Rag-and-Bone  
 Is propped up tall  
 (Lest in death it fall)  
 Against the Sea-wall.

Their empty mouths are sewed up whole  
 Lest from hunger they gape and cough up their soul  
 The arms of one are stretched out wide . . .  
 How long, since our Christ was crucified ?

Rich man Judas,  
 Brother Cain,  
 The rich men are your worms that gain  
 The air through seething from your brain ;  
 Judas, mouldering in your old  
 Coffin body, still undying  
 As the Worm, where you are lying  
 With no flesh for warmth, but gold  
 For flesh, for warmth, for sheet,  
 Now you are fleshless, too, as these  
 That starve and freeze ;  
 Is your gold hard as Hell's huge polar street,  
 Is the universal blackness of Hell's day so cold ?

. . . . .

When, creeping over  
 The Sailor's street  
 Where the houses like ratskin  
 Masks flap, meet  
 Never across the murdered bone  
 Of the sailor, the whining overtone  
 Of dawn sounds, slaves  
 Rise from their graves,  
 Where in the corpse-sheet night they lay  
 Forgetting the mutilating day,  
 Like the unborn child in its innocent sleep.  
 Ah Christ, the murdered light must weep—

(Christ that takest away the sin  
 Of the world, and the rich man's bone-dead grin)  
 The light must weep  
 Seeing that sleep  
 And those slaves rise up in their death-chains, part  
 The light from the eyes  
 The hands from the heart,  
 Since their hearts are flesh for the tall  
 And sprawling  
 Reeling appalling  
 Cannibal mart,  
 But their hands and head  
 Are machines to breed  
 Gold for the old and the greedy Dead.

I have seen the murdered God look through the eyes  
 Of the drunkard's smirched  
 Mask as he lurched  
 O'er the half of my heart that lies in the street  
 Neath the dancing fleas and the foul news-sheet.

Where, a black gap flapping,  
 A white skin drum  
 The cannibal houses  
 Watch this come—  
 Lady Bamburgher's party ; for the plan  
 Is a prize for those that on all fours ran  
 Through the rotting slum  
 Till those who come  
 Could never guess from the mudcovered shapes  
 Which are the rich or the mired dire apes  
 As they run where the souls, dirty paper, are blown  
 In the hour before dawn, through this long hell of stone.



Perhaps if I too lie down in the mud,  
 Beneath tumbrils rolling  
 And mad skulls galloping  
 Far from their bunches of nerves that dance  
 And caper among these slums and prance,  
 Beneath the noise of that hell that rolls  
 I shall forget the shrunken souls  
 The eyeless mud squealing "God is dead,"  
 Starved men (bags of wind), and the harlot's tread,  
 The heaven turned into monkey-hide  
 By Lady Bamburgher's dancing fleas,  
 Her rotting parties and death-slack ease,  
 And the dead men drunken  
 (The only tide)  
 Blown up and down  
 And tossed through the town  
 Over the half of my heart that lies,  
 Deep down, in this meaner Death with cries.  
  
 The leaves of black hippopotamus-hide  
 Black as the mud  
 Cover the blood  
 And the rotting world. Do we smell and see  
  
 That sick thick smoke from London burning,  
 Gomorrah turning  
 Like worms in the grave,  
 The Bedlam daylights murderous roar,  
 Those pillars of fire the drunkard and whore,  
 Dirty souls boiled in cannibal cookshops to paper  
 To make into newspapers, flags? . . . They caper  
 Like gaping apes. Foul fires we see,  
 For Bedlam awakes to reality.

The drunken burning,  
 The skin drums galloping,  
 In their long march still parched for the sky,  
 The Rotten Alleys where beggars groan  
 And the beggar and his dog share a bone ;  
 The rich man Cain that hides within  
 His lumbering palaces where Sin  
 Through the eyeless holes of Day peers in,  
 The murdered heart that all night turns  
 From small machine to shapeless Worm  
 With hate, and like Gomorrah burns—  
 These put the eyes of Heaven out,  
 These raise all Hell's throats to a shout,  
 These break my heart's walls toppling in,  
 And like a universal sea  
 The nations of the Dead crowd in.

Bahunda, Banbangala, Barumbe, Bonge,  
 And London fall . . . rolling human skin drums  
 Surrounded by long black hair, I hear  
 Their stones that fall,  
 Their voices that call,  
 Among the black and the bellowing bones.

But yet when the cannibal  
 Sun is high  
 The sightless mud  
 Weeps tears, a sigh,  
 To rhinoceros-hided leaves : " Ah why  
 So sightless, earless, voiceless, I ? "

The mud has at least its skulls to roll ;  
 But here as I walk, no voices call,

Only the stones and the bones that fall;  
 But yet if only one soul would whine,  
 Rat-like from the lowest mud, I should know  
 That somewhere in God's vast love it would shine;  
 But even the rat-whine has guttered low.

I saw the Blind like a winding-sheet  
 Tossed up and down through the blind man's street  
 Where the dead plague-spot  
 Of the spirit's rot  
 On the swollen thick houses  
 Cries to the quick,  
 Cries to the dark soul that lies there and dies  
 In hunger and murk, and answers not.

Gomorrah's fires have washed my blood—  
 But the fires of God shall wash the mud  
 Till the skin drums rolling  
 The slum cries sprawling  
 And crawling  
 Are calling  
 "Burn thou me!"  
 Though Death has taken  
 And pig-like shaken  
 Rooted and tossed  
 The rags of me.  
 Yet the time will come  
 To the heart's dark slum  
 When the rich man's gold and the rich man's wheat  
 Will grow in the street, that the starved may eat,—  
 And the sea of the rich will give up its dead—  
 And the last blood and fire from my side will be shed.  
 For the fires of God go marching on.

“The Negroes indulge that perfect contempt for humanity which in its bearing on Justice and Morality is the fundamental characteristic of the race. They have, moreover, no knowledge of the immortality of the soul, although spectres are supposed to appear. The undervaluing of humanity among them reaches an incredible degree of intensity. Tyranny is regarded as no wrong, and cannibalism is looked upon as quite customary and proper. Among us instinct deters from it, if we can speak of instinct at all as appertaining to man. But with the Negro this is not the case, and the devouring of human flesh is altogether consonant with the general principles of the African race; to the sensual Negro, human flesh is but an object of sense—mere flesh. At the death of a king hundreds are killed and eaten; prisoners are butchered and their flesh sold in the market-place; the victor is accustomed to eat the flesh of his fallen foe.”—HEGEL’S “Philosophy of History.”

*Page 252, line 5:* “Munza rattles his bones in the dust.” King Munza reigned, in 1874, over the Monbuttoo, a race of cannibals in Central Africa. These notes are taken from Dr. Georg Schweinfurth’s “The Heart of Africa” (translated by Ellen Frewer, published by Messrs. Sampson Low). Of the Monbuttoo and their neighbours the Niam-Niam, we read: “Human fat is universally sold. . . . Should any lone and solitary individual die, uncared for . . . he would be sure to be devoured in the very district in which he lived. During our residence at the court of Munza the general rumour was quite current that nearly every day some little child was sacrificed to supply his meal. There are cases in which bearers who died from fatigue had been dug out of the graves in which they had been buried . . . in order that they might be devoured. The cannibalism of the Monbuttoo is the most pronounced of all the known nations of Africa. Surrounded as they are by a number of people who, being inferior to them in culture, are consequently held in great contempt, they have just the opportunity which they want for carrying on expeditions of war and plunder, which result in the acquisition of a booty which is especially coveted by them, consisting of human flesh. But with it all, the Monbuttoos are a noble race of men, men who display a certain national pride . . . men to whom one may put a reasonable question and receive a reasonable answer. The Nubians can never say enough in praise of their faithfulness in friendly intercourse and of the order and stability of their national life. According

to the Nubians, too, the Monbuttoos were their superiors in the arts of war."

Any traveller from Monbuttoo visiting first of all our new "Original Parties" and then walking down the Embankment, or in those streets of Revue Theatres, where our late heroes sell matches in the gutter, could not fail to be impressed by the superiority of our civilization over that of the Monbuttoos.

*Page 257, line 26:* "And her soul, the Cannibal Amazon's mart."

"Tradition alleges that in former times a state composed of women made itself famous by its conquests: it was a state at whose head was a woman. She is said to have pounded her own son in a mortar, and to have had the blood of pounded children constantly at hand. She is said to have driven away or put to death all the males, and commanded the death of all male children. These furies destroyed everything in the neighbourhood, and were driven to constant plunderings because they did not cultivate the land. . . . This infamous state, the report goes on to say, subsequently disappeared."  
—HEGEL's "Philosophy of History," chapter on Africa.

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